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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

A Foul Tip

A Comedy Drama in Three Acts

By

CHARLES S. ALLEN

Author of "The Teaser," etc.

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1912

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CHARACTERS

TIM PURDY, *postmaster, chief of police and storekeeper at Westvale.*

HIRAM ROWELL, *the village expressman.*

OLIVER IRVING, *manufacturer.*

HAROLD IRVING, *his son.*

VERNE GALE, *manager of the Westvale nine.*

POLLARD, *Irving's bookkeeper.*

PETE ADAMS, *colored pitcher on the Westvale nine.*

ALMIRA PURDY, *Tim's wife.*

MABEL REMINGTON, *Irving's stenographer.*

NELLIE GALE, *Verne's sister.*

Members of the ball team, villagers, etc.

If desired specialties may be introduced in the second act by the boys who are celebrating the victory of their ball team.



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ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

TIMOTHY PURDY.—A big-hearted sympathetic man of the Josh Whitcomb type. Age about 70 ; smooth face, ruddy complexion ; thin wig, gray or partly bald ; ordinary country costume. Uncle Tim is a natural product of the country, kind and lovable. The part should not be burlesqued in any way.

HIRAM ROWELL.—A lazy, slouchy, happy-go-lucky sort of fellow, age 68 ; country costume of a rough type, gray wig, scraggly chin whiskers and moustache, old soft or straw hat ; an old linen duster may be worn in some of the scenes if desired to add variety to the costumes.

OLIVER IRVING.—Clean-cut, self-willed, cold-mannered business man, about 55 years old ; slightly gray dress wig ; a moustache and neatly trimmed beard would go well with the part, the idea being to convey an impression of a successful business man who has always had his own way.

HAROLD IRVING.—Smart, lively, stylishly dressed, age 25. This part might well be given to one who will act as stage director, for while the demands of the part are not heavy, it should be taken by some one who is quick and alert to grasp all the strong situations in the play and bring them out to the best possible advantage.

VERNE GALE.—Care should be taken to emphasize the frank and manly character of Verne, who is about 24. Though under suspicion he is not weak or effeminate, and careful study will make this part very effective. Ordinary summer costume.

POLLARD.—A polished, genteel appearing fellow, well dressed, but rather loud and sporty ; age about 28. Surly and cynical in speech to all but Irving. A loud red necktie should be worn in the second and third acts.

PETE ADAMS.—This is a straight part and should not be burlesqued in the slightest degree. Adams is a manly young mulatto, age about 23 ; and the part should be played earnestly and seriously. Baseball costume and ordinary summer suit may be worn.

ALMIRA PURDY.—A type of the narrow-minded, gossipy and inquisitive country woman. She speaks in a snappy, peppery sort of way, and is very much afraid that she will not see everything that is going on.

MABEL REMINGTON.—A bright, active girl, age 18 ; she is a girl of the athletic type, lively and unconventional, but true blue. If the part of Nellie Gale is taken by a brunette Mabel should be made up as a blonde. The part should be played lightly as a foil for the more serious part of Nellie Gale.

NELLIE GALE.—A character of the emotional type, age 19. The lines should be spoken seriously and the situations should be carefully studied to get the best possible effects from several very strong scenes. Costumes, simple summer gowns.

NOTES

Especial care should be given to rehearsing the scenes in which the baseball team appears; there should be no hesitation in dialogue or action, and both should go with snap and vim to get the best effect.

The phonograph records called for are as follows: "Mocking Bird," Xylophone solo, Edison Amberol record No. 564. "Moonlight on the Lake," Edison Amberol record No. 578. "Sweetest Story Ever Told," Edison Amberol record, No. 786.

The last record plays the selection through twice, and the best effect will be obtained at the opening of the third act, to have Nellie enter between the first and second part, as noted in the text.

The platform only of Purdy's store need be shown in the stage setting. This may extend along the left side of stage, leaving sufficient room ~~in rear~~ for side entrance. This arrangement leaves the stage practically clear with the exception of the bench and tree at right.

Villagers may be introduced in some of the scenes if desired, particularly if specialties are put on.

PROPERTIES

ACT I.—Tinware, garden tools, etc., for store platform. Watch for Hiram. Pitcher's glove and bat for Adams. Telephone bell. Roll of bills for Harold. Bell for Irving to give Tim. Stamps for Almira to give Mabel. Mail bag for Hiram. Bundle of bats for Hiram. Bill for Hiram to give Almira. Pocketbook for Tim.

ACT II.—Mail bag for Hiram. Pocketbook for Pollard to drop. Record: Xylophone solo, "Mocking Bird," with variations. Any xylophone solo will do, but this is an extra good one. Broom for Almira. Record: "Moonlight on the Lake," or any good loud selection. Thunder and lightning effects. Rubber coat for Tim. Shawls and waterproofs for Nell and Mabel.

ACT III.—Letter for Nell. Edison Amberol record: "Sweetest Story Ever Told." Venetian Trio. A beautifully played record. Paper for Hiram. Magazine for Almira. Badge for Tim. Watch for the boys to give Nell. Pocketbook for Pollard. Plank or rail to carry Pollard on. Engine whistle.

A Foul Tip

ACT I

SCENE.—*Exterior of Purdy's store left of stage ; covered platform common to country stores ; tinware, garden tools, etc., displayed. Village scene for back drop. Rustic or foliage wings for right of stage which is supposed to be adjacent to the village common and ball field. Tree and bench R., well down front. Lamp-post or reflector lamp at up-stage corner of store platform. Time, Saturday forenoon in June.*

(*At rise of curtain TIM PURDY is discovered sitting on store platform reading paper ; ball players are heard outside at practice. Ball thrown in lands among tinware and makes a big racket. TIM jumps up, grabs the ball, and throws it out with considerable effort.*)

TIM. Be keerful, boys ; you'll break some glass fust thing ye know. (*'Phone rings ; TIM enters store to answer.*) Hello. Yes. What? Two pounds be enough? All right.—No, I ain't got any fly paper ; got some good sandpaper, though. What? No, s'pose not. Good-bye.

(*TIM in door as OLIVER IRVING enters.*)

IRV. (*entering R.*). Good-morning, Mr. Purdy.

TIM. Why, how d'ye do, Mr. Irving? What can I do for you this morning? (*Walks down C., meets IRV.*)

IRV. They tell me that you are the chief of police in this village.

(*IRV., R. C. TIM, L. C.*)

TIM. Yes, sir, I am. In fact I'm the whole department jest now. The other man's gone on his vacation.

IRV. Have you ever done any detective work, Mr. Purdy?

TIM. Wal, once in a while I pull up an automobile choffer for overspeedin' jest to keep my hand in ; but most of them get away.

IRV. I wasn't aware that anything down here ever went fast enough to get away.

TIM. So you think this is a slow town, do ye, Mr. Irving?

IRV. It's quiet, very quiet.

TIM. Wal, s'pose it does seem so to you ; but when you kinder git into society, so to speak, you'll find it quite lively here, I reckon.

IRV. Possibly.

TIM. Yes, indeed, specially in winter. Why, there ain't hardly a week passes that there ain't a whist party or a church supper or spellin' bee or something. I tell ye, it's quite a social whirl here in the winter time.

IRV. I am glad to know that, Mr. Purdy, but just now I have something else on my mind.

TIM. Is that so? What is it?

IRV. (*glancing around cautiously*). Are you sure we won't be overheard?

TIM (*looking off L., then in store, coming down*). All right, fire away, Mr. Irving—there's no one around. Almira, she can't hear, for she's busy with the mail.

(TIM, R. C. IRV., L. C.)

IRV. Some money was stolen from my safe last night.

TIM. Sho! You don't say! How much?

IRV. About one hundred dollars.

TIM. Wal, I vum! Ain't this a pretty how-de-do, an' half the police force on its vacation. Ever miss any before?

IRV. Yes, several times.

TIM. Much?

IRV. No ; that is, only small amounts at a time, but quite a sum in the aggregate.

TIM. Who's your bookkeeper?

IRV. Mr. Pollard.

TIM. I s'pose he knows the combination to your safe?

IRV. Yes, naturally.

TIM. Anybody else?

IRV. Yes.

TIM. Who?

IRV. Well, there's my son, Harold ; Miss Remington, my stenographer, and young Gale.

TIM. Gale? You mean Verne Gale, do ye?

IRV. Yes; he worked for me a short time.

TIM. Left when he decided to study law, didn't he?

IRV. Yes.

TIM. Fine lad, Verne is, mighty likely boy!

IRV. Then you're a friend of his?

TIM. Wal, I should say yes. Why, I've known Verne ever since he was knee high to a grasshopper. Knew his father an' mother afore him. Fine family right through.

IRV. His parents are not living?

TIM. No, only Verne and Nell left. You know her, don't ye?

IRV. No.

TIM. Guess your son does.

IRV. (*coolly*). Possibly.

TIM. Yes; don't take young folks long to get acquainted. Powerful nice girl, Nellie Gale is; smart as a whip, an' a good housekeeper, too. But this ain't business. How about your man Pollard, is he all right?

IRV. I have no cause to think otherwise.

TIM. Do you suspect any one?

IRV. (*hesitatingly*). Well—no—that is, I can't say that I do exactly.

TIM. No clues nor nothin' to work on?

IRV. No clues, but some of the missing bills were marked—that may help some.

TIM. Marked?

IRV. Yes; the thefts have been so frequent of late that it occurred to me to mark those particular bills, as they were new, just from the bank.

TIM. Good idee! How'd you mark 'em?

IRV. With a small cross in black ink on the back of the bills in the upper left hand corner.

TIM. All small bills?

IRV. The marked bills were fives and tens. I thought some of them might turn up at your store.

TIM. Mebbe so, but I doubt it.

IRV. Well, keep your eyes open, Mr. Purdy. I'm in a hurry now; will see you later.

TIM. All right, any time.

IRV. (*starting off R., pausing*). If you happen to run across any of the bills call me up, will you?

TIM. Yes, if I do.

[*Exit IRV., R.*]

NELLIE GALE (*outside L.*). Do you know where Verne is, Mr. Rowell?

HIRAM ROWELL (*outside*). No; ain't seen him to-day.

TIM. I'd like to know who Irving suspects. I'll bet a cent he has somebody in his mind. (*Sits by store door meditating.*)

Enter NEL., L.

NEL. Oh, Uncle Tim, is Verne here? (L. C.)

TIM. No, dear; wouldn't be s'prised if he's out on the ball grounds.

NEL. If you see him will you tell him that Harold Irving is looking for him, please?

(*Crosses to R.; stands by seat under tree.*)

TIM. Harold Irving? (*Rises and comes down L. C.*)

NEL. Yes; he called at the house.

TIM. Did he? To see Verne?

NEL. Yes; Hal's going away quite unexpectedly.

TIM. Now, 'tain't possible that he jest kinder called round on the side, so ter speak, to see you, is it?

NEL. Perhaps so; and why not, Uncle Tim? We are very good friends.

TIM. I don't see any earthly reason why not, Nell. I only said that jest for fun. Harold Irving's a likely boy, I guess—better'n the average, an' he shows good sense in choosin' his friends, takin' you an' Verne as samples, for instance.

NEL. It's nice of you to say that; I wish his father thought so, too. (*Sits on bench.*)

TIM. His father! What do you mean, Nell? Now tell me what's gone wrong.

NEL. I'm unhappy, Uncle Tim, very unhappy this morning.

TIM (*with solicitude*). Now that's too bad, Nell, too bad! What's the trouble, kinder upset because Hal is goin' away?

(*Stands at NEL.'s left.*)

NEL. Yes, but more because his father so bitterly opposes our friendship. That's why he's sending Hal away. Mr. Irving even objects to Hal's intimacy with Verne. Sit down, Uncle Tim.

(*TIM sits at NEL.'s left.*)

TIM. What's he got agin you an' Verne, I'd like to know?

NEL. You must remember, Uncle Tim, that rich men have ambitious plans for their sons; Mr. Irving is no exception. He wants Hal to choose his friends from his own circle.

TIM. Thunderation! Irving ain't so mighty rich, I guess. Do you mean to tell me that he thinks you an' Verne ain't good enough company for his son?

NEL. (*earnestly*). I mean, Uncle Tim, that Mr. Irving has plans of his own for Hal's future—plans in which I have no place. I am not the kind of a girl he wants his son to marry.

TIM. Marry! Why, Nell, I guess I don't quite understand—I —

NEL. (*interrupting*). I'm afraid you don't, Uncle Tim. You must remember that I'm no longer a child, though I hope that to you I will always be your little Nell; the same little girl you took to your heart, when with her brother, she was left fatherless and motherless—almost homeless.—Oh, you've been so good to me, so good to Verne. I'll never forget it, never; but I'm older than most girls of my years, Uncle Tim; sorrow has made me so. I'm a woman now, facing a woman's future.

TIM. Bless me, so you are, Nell, so you are; but I can scarcely realize it. So you think you've sorter outgrown my guardianship, do ye?

NEL. Oh, no, not that, Uncle Tim; no one can ever take your place.

TIM (*with feeling*). I'm glad to hear ye say that, Nell, mighty glad, for you're like an own daughter to me, almost, an' I'd hate awfully to have ye sorter grow away from me, like; I'd feel somehow as if I'd kinder lost my job, so ter speak, if I didn't have you an' Verne to look after.

NEL. I shall always come to you for help and advice, Uncle Tim, so you need have no fear of losing your job. It sounds funny to hear you speak of it like that. Now what ought I to do about Hal?

TIM. If I's you I'd let the matter drift for a spell. Don't fret! You ain't so old but what you can afford to wait a while an' let things take their course.

NEL. But what if Hal —?

TIM (*interrupting*). Don't worry about Hal. If he's the boy I think he is he's capable of managin' his own love affairs an' it's dollars to doughnuts if he don't bring his father to the same way of thinkin'.

NEL. Then you do not think it's wrong for me to —?
(HIRAM *heard whistling outside.*) Oh, some one's coming.

(*Rises.*)

TIM. Sounds like Hiram Rowell's whistle.

(*Rises ; goes up c. a little.*)

NEL. I must go, Uncle Tim. If you see Verne you won't forget to tell him about Hal, will you?

TIM. I'll remember, Nell. Now cheer up. When the sun comes out things'll look brighter all 'round. (*Exit NEL., R. Enter HIRAM, L.*) Hello, Hiram! Goin' to the game this afternoon? (*Comes down R. C.*)

HIRAM. Guess not; looks like rain, wind's right.

(*Looks off R. ; comes down L. C.*)

TIM. You can't tell nothin' by the church weather-vane, Hi, 'tain't workin'.

HIRAM. Ain't it?

TIM. No; I cal'late the sun'll be out by noon.

HIRAM. It's got to clear up pretty quick then. It's a quarter past ten now. (*Looks at old-fashioned silver watch.*)

TIM. Wal, I'm lookin' for a mighty hot game if they play.

HIRAM. I ain't so sure 'bout that. Ferd Pike went all to pieces in the game last Saturday. Verne Gale had to take him out in the third innin'.

TIM. What of it? We got the game jest the same, didn't we? Verne's something of a pitcher himself.

HIRAM. He ain't so bad.

TIM. Guess he ain't. It's goin' some to strike out twelve men, some of 'em the hardest hitters on the Brewster team.

HIRAM. Gale can't do that stunt every day, Tim.

TIM. That's so, Hiram. That's why he's signed Pete Adams.

HIRAM. What! Adams the nigger watchman up to the shoe factory?

TIM. That's the boy! He pitched a great game Wednesday.

HIRAM. What's Gale want a nigger pitcher for?

TIM. You don't object to Adams on account of his color, do ye, Hi? I didn't s'pose you had it in ye to be so narrer.

HIRAM. I ain't narrer. Don't you insinuate for a minute that I be ——

TIM. Insinuate! Anybody might know you've been

boardin' the schoolmarm. I didn't insinuate—I jest twitted ye of bein' what I said ye was.

HIRAM. Wal, anyway, when it comes to the national game, it seems as if we might find white fellers enough to play it.

TIM. Now you jest listen to me a minute, Hi Rowell, an' listen hard. Pete Adams' grandfather took part in a national game way back in '61 an' he was with a winnin' team too; an' I remember that jest about that same time you was chasin' around for a substitute. There's one for ye, Hi, right over the plate.

HIRAM. By Judas, Tim Purdy, I ain't goin' to take no more sass from you if you be one-half the police force of this town. You shut up! If you don't I'll put a quietus on to ye.

TIM. 'Twouldn't hold in law, Hi. 'Tain't legal. Thunder, if you board the teacher much longer you'll be spittin' dictionaries next thing.

HIRAM. Wal, p'raps I will an' p'raps I won't, but so far's this nigger pitcher's concerned —

TIM (*interrupting quickly*). So far's Pete Adams's concerned you keep your mouth shet or there'll be a substitute expressman in Westvale for a few days.

(ALMIRA PURDY *at store door*.)

ALMIRA. Say! What are you kids scrappin' about? Come along in here, Tim, and git the mail ready.

TIM (*meekly*). I'm comin', Almiry.

(*Starts up L. ; HIRAM crosses to R.*)

ALMIRA (*coming down c.*). An' you, Hiram Rowell, you'd better say nothin' and saw wood. Nancy told me not more'n an hour ago that you hadn't enough worked up to bake the beans with.

HIRAM. Wal, guess we can git along without the beans. Can't expect me to run the express business an' tend to household duties, too, kin ye?

ALMIRA. I guess 'tis expectin' most too much of *you*.

HIRAM. But, Almiry —

ALMIRA. Oh, you needn't try to palaver 'round me. Nice kind of a man you be—set around an' let your wife slave from mornin' till night. She never gits out to go nowheres, not even to the sewing circle.

HIRAM. Wal, I——

Positions :

ALMIRA, C.

HIRAM, R.

TIM, L.

ALMIRA. Shut up! Don't talk back to me. I don't allow my own husband to do that. Ef I's Nancy, I'd get a divorce, that's what I'd do.

HIRAM. By chowder, I guess I'd want ye to, Almiry. What in thunder are you talkin' about, anyway?

TIM. She's talkin' about all the time, as usual.

ALMIRA. That's enough from you, Tim Purdy. Thought I told you to git the mail ready.

HIRAM. Ef my axe was as sharp as your tongue, Almiry, I'd have my whole wood-pile worked up in half an hour.

ALMIRA. You ain't got more'n half a cord anyway. (*'Phone rings.*) Come along, Tim. [*Exit ALMIRA, in store.*]

(*Cheering outside. "Adams, Adams, rah, rah, rah! He's all right! Who's all right? A-d-a-m-s—Tiger!"*)

TIM. There, now, Hi, don't that sound's ef the new pitcher's makin' good?

Enter VERNE GALE and PETE ADAMS, R.; PETE has on uniform, pitcher's glove and bat in hands.

GALE. We're going after them to-day, all right, Uncle Tim. Ah, Mr. Rowell, you're just the man I want to see.

HIRAM. Wal, 'twon't cost ye nothin'.

GALE. I'm not so sure about that. I'm expecting a bundle of bats to-day. Did they come this morning?

HIRAM. Not on the first train; the express hain't got in yet.

Positions :

ADAMS.

GALE.

HIRAM.

TIM.

GALE. If they come will you leave them here, please?

HIRAM. Yes, when I bring up the mail.

GALE. Good! What do you think of my new pitcher, Uncle Tim?

TIM. He's all right. (*To PETE.*) I'm mighty glad you're on the team, Adams. I hope you'll make good.

PETE (*who is gentlemanly and reserved*). Thanks, Mr. Purdy. I'll do my best.

TIM. That's all angels can do. You'll win out all right.

HIRAM. Wal, guess I'll go an' hitch up. [*Exit.*]

TIM. Oh, Verne, I most forgot something. Harold Irving's lookin' for you. Nell wanted me to tell ye ——

GALE. All right, Uncle Tim, I'll hunt him up.

ALMIRA (*at door*). Tim, are you comin'?

TIM. In jest a minute, Almiry; don't hurry me so.

ALMIRA. Hurry you! Man alive! I couldn't hurry you; you move slower than a bug on a tarred stick. Now mosey along and git the mail ready.

TIM. You've heard the proclamation, boys. Guess p'raps I'd better go. Won't you wait? I won't be long.

GALE. No, thanks; not this morning, Uncle Tim.

TIM. Wal, stop in any time; you too, Adams; glad to have ye.

PETE. Thank you, Mr. Purdy. (*Exit TIM.*) I like that man, Verne; is he a friend of yours?

GALE. One of the best a fellow ever had, Adams.

PETE. You're in luck. (*Looks off R.*) Here's Harold Irving. I'll go along now; back soon, Verne. [*Exit, L.*]

Enter HAROLD IRVING, R.

HAROLD. Great luck! You're just the chap I'm looking for.

GALE. What's up?

HAROLD. Everything! I'm going away on the 11:10.

GALE. Going away! Where?

HAROLD. Western trip, some business of Dad's.

Positions:

HAROLD, R. C.

GALE, L. C.

GALE. Sudden, isn't it?

HAROLD. Rather; never knew a thing about it till last night. Hate awfully to go just now because ——

GALE. Because?

HAROLD. Well, because—say, Verne, will you do me a favor?

GALE. You don't need to ask; what is it?

HAROLD. Now it's just this way, Verne. Going away so unexpectedly has upset all my plans. Listen! Next week Thursday will be your sister's birthday—and——

GALE. By Jove, so it will. Say, Hal, since when have you become so familiar with the chronology of our family?

HAROLD. Oh, that's all right. Chaff me if you like. I don't mind. I was about to say that I intended to give Nellie a watch.

GALE. And now she'll miss the *time* of her life; but it's nice of you, Hal, just the same.

HAROLD. No, she shall have the watch even if I'm not here to give it to her.

GALE. Well, what do you want me to do? Where do I fit in?

HAROLD. Don't be in such a hurry; just give me time.

GALE. Oh, I thought *you* had time to give away.

Enter PETE, L. back, remains unseen.

HAROLD. Wretched pun, Verne, cut it! Here, take this money. (*Hands roll of bills.*) I want you to get the watch for Nellie. I'd like one of those dainty thin affairs, with a plain case.

GALE. It's a plain case all right.

HAROLD. Shut up!

GALE. Then you don't want an open face?

HAROLD. I don't want yours open when I'm trying to talk.

GALE. All right, spiel away.

HAROLD. Have her initials engraved on the case.

GALE. Then this is an initial proceeding. I thought from what you've said that it had been going on for some time.

HAROLD. Oh, for the love of Mike, do be serious. Get a chain or a chatelaine to go with it.

GALE. With the love of Mike?

HAROLD. No, no, the watch. Confound you! Have it delivered on Nell's birthday without a word of explanation. It'll keep her guessing.

GALE. But what if she asks me about it? What will I do?

HAROLD. Well, can't you put up some kind of a bluff, just to help me out?

GALE. Yes, I suppose so, but——

HAROLD. All right, then no buts. Keep the whole business a profound secret. You promise?

GALE. Yes.

HAROLD. And, Verne?

GALE. Well?

HAROLD. Twenty dollars of the money is for the ball team. Put it where it'll do the most good. [*Exit PETE quietly R.*]

GALE. Hal, you're a brick. Forgive me for jollyng you.

HAROLD. That's all right, old boy, but remember, on your honor, not a word to any one.

GALE. On my honor, Hal, and that goes.

HAROLD. I know it. (*Looks at watch.*) My, how time flies when you haven't any to spare.

GALE. Yes, same way with money.

HAROLD. I say, Verne, take me up to the house in Duckey's car, will you? I didn't realize it was so late.

GALE. Sure thing, come on!

(*As they start off hurriedly back, MAB. enters R.*)

MAB. Where's the fire, Verne? I haven't heard any alarm.

(MAB., R. HAL., C. GALE, L.)

GALE. No fire; just going to see Hal off. Of course you'll go to the game?

MAB. Yes, if it doesn't rain.

GALE. It won't; the sun's most out now. It'll be a hot one—the game, I mean.

Enter HIRAM, R. Goes in store, gets mail-bag and comes to store door.

HAROLD. Keep an eye on Verne while I'm away, Mabel.

MAB. Leave it to me, Mr. Irving. I wish you a pleasant journey.

HAROLD. Thanks. (*To GALE.*) Come, hurry up.

GALE. Coming along, Hiram?

HIRAM. Yes, but I've got to drive over to the shoe shop first.

GALE. Perhaps I'll see you at the depot, then. Anyway, keep an eye out for those bats. We'll need them this afternoon.

(Exit HAROLD and GALE. Auto horn outside, etc. MAB. crosses to L.)

ALMIRA (*inside*). Tim! Tim!

HIRAM. Tim ain't here, Almiry. (*Comes down R. C. To MAB.*) Almiry's sorter wound up this mornin'. Guess if you don't mind I'll move along.

MAB. You're quite excusable, Mr. Rowell.

ALMIRA (*inside*). Tim! Tim! I declare, Tim's so crazy over baseball that I can't keep track of him at all. (MAB. crosses to bench; stands. ALMIRA enters via store door.) Oh, good-morning, Miss Remington. Ain't seen Tim, hev ye?

MAB. No, Mrs. Purdy. I'd like fifty two-cent stamps.

ALMIRA. Use a lot of stamps, don't ye?

MAB. Yes, a great many.

ALMIRA. You're workin' up to the shoe fact'ry, ain't ye, Miss Remington?

MAB. Yes.

ALMIRA. Running a machine?

MAB. Yes, a typewriter.

ALMIRA. Then you don't really work?

MAB. Work? Certainly I do, Mrs. Purdy! Why do you ask such a question?

(MAB., at bench. ALMIRA, C.)

ALMIRA. Oh, I dunno. I sorter had an idee that about all typewriters had to do was to set around and polish their finger nails.

MAB. (*provoked*). You are quite mistaken, Mrs. Purdy.

ALMIRA. Oh, no offense, Miss Remington. Mr. Irving's a nice sort of a man to work for, ain't he?

MAB. Well, any one who likes a man of his temperament would be apt to like Mr. Irving very much.

ALMIRA (*confused*). Why—I—well, yes, that's what I thought. His son's sorter shinin' up to Nellie Gale, isn't he?

MAB. Is he?

ALMIRA. Yes, so they say. Pretty wild sort of a chap, I guess, from what I hear.

MAB. What people hear is not always correct, Mrs. Purdy. (*Aside.*) She's a human interrogation point. I must get away somehow. (*Aloud.*) Will you please get my stamps? I'm in a hurry.

Enter POLLARD, R. ALMIRA eyes him sharply.

ALMIRA. Come right in, Miss Remington; I'll get your stamps in a jiffy.

(Exit ALMIRA, in store. MAB. starts to follow.)

POL. One moment, Mabel.

(MAB. comes down L. C.)

MAB. Well, what is it?

POL. I'd like to take you to the game this afternoon.

MAB. Thanks. I'm otherwise engaged.

POL. What's the matter with you lately, Mabel?

MAB. Nothing; why?

POL. You're not very chummy,—quite frosty, in fact.

MAB. I have no time to be chummy, Mr. Pollard.

POL. You find time enough to give to Verne Gale.

MAB. You have no right to speak like that. How dare you?

POL. You can't deny it. Wasn't he in our counting-room last night?

MAB. Yes.

POL. And didn't he walk home with you?

MAB. What if he did? Did it ever occur to you, Mr. Pollard, that you could save yourself a great deal of worry by minding your own business?

POL. Now, don't get angry, Mabel; it isn't becoming. So you won't go to the game?

MAB. Yes, but not with you.

POL. Oh, I see! Well, that's all right. Excuse me for suggesting it.

ALMIRA *(outside)*. Here's your stamps, Miss Remington.

[Exit MAB., in store.]

POL. Verne Gale is getting too popular altogether. *(Crosses to L. C. Enter PETE, R.)* See here, Adams, I've got a bone to pick with you.

PETE. All right; pick away.

POL. After the talk I had with you I didn't expect to see the Westvales win their last game. You played like a fiend.

PETE. And why not? That's what I am paid for.

POL. Isn't my money as good as Gale's?

PETE. Not when you try to use it dishonestly.

POL. Hold on, Adams; you're going too far.

PETE. No, Mr. Pollard, *you* have gone too far. You tried to bribe me to throw the game. You are mistaken in your man.

POL. Man! You! (*Laughs contemptuously.*) Irving's nigger watchman.

PETE. You haven't anything on me, even if I am colored. I fancy the Westvale boys wouldn't consider it exactly manly in *you* if they knew about the dirty job you tried to put up on them.

POL. If you breathe a word I'll make it so warm for you that you can't stay in Westvale.

PETE. You can't scare me, Mr. Pollard. As to telling, it's up to you if you want this matter kept quiet.

POL. Oh, I see! A bit of blackmail. Fine! Fine! You want me to buy your silence?

PETE. No. I have nothing to sell that *your* money could buy. I want nothing to do with you or your kind. If you attempt any more of your dirty work *you'll* be the one to leave town, and I guess there'll be quite a delegation to see you off.

POL. Shut up, you cur, or I'll cram your words down your throat.

PETE. You're mistaken again. I'm stronger than *you*. You wouldn't enjoy receiving a black eye from a "nigger," would you?

POL. (*taking off coat*). Put up your hands.

PETE. I hate to do it, but if you insist.

(*Removes coat. A little sparring may be introduced at discretion of stage manager.*)

Enter MAB., from store.

MAB. What does this mean?

PETE. Don't be alarmed, Miss Mabel. I'm giving Mr. Pollard a few points in the art of self-defense. (*To POL.*) Got enough?

(PETE, R. MAB., C. POL., L.)

POL. (*surlily*). Yes; I will call it off for the present.

PETE (*cheerfully*). All right. Give you another go any time you say.

(*Puts on coat and exits R., whistling. POL. crosses and takes coat from seat. Puts it on.*)

MAB. Were you having trouble with Adams, Mr. Pollard? (*Comes down c.*)

POL. You heard what he said, didn't you?

MAB. Yes, but I thought you were quarreling when I came in.

POL. Nothing serious, I assure you.

MAB. It looked for a minute as if you were going to get yours, as the boys say. By the way, Mr. Pollard, great game Wednesday, wasn't it?

POL. Rather exciting, yes. (*Annoyed.*)

MAB. Verne Gale didn't get his that time, did he?

POL. (*aside*). Confound her impudence! (*Aloud.*) No, baseball is a very uncertain game.

(POL., R. C. MAB., L. C.)

MAB. So it is. Yet you seem very confident. Why were you so sure the Westvales would lose?

POL. (*aside*). She's mighty inquisitive. (*Aloud.*) Well, the Brewsters have a better nine, but luck was with Gale's team all the time.

MAB. It wasn't luck when Verne made that dandy catch way out by the left-field fence, was it?

POL. Sure thing. He couldn't do that once in a hundred years.

MAB. Well, how about that three-bagger he made in the ninth, that brought in two runs and won the game? That wasn't luck, I don't think. My, but didn't they cheer Verne, though!

POL. Yes, some folks seem to think Gale is the whole team.

MAB. An opinion that evidently you do not share.

POL. My opinion of Verne Gale counts for but little with you; a man with half an eye can see that.

MAB. I'm glad your eyesight is good, Mr. Pollard. It may save you some embarrassment in the future.

POL. Cut out the sarcasm, Mabel. As for the future—well, wait and see.

MAB. Very sensible advice, Mr. Pollard, since the future presents no other alternative. (*Tantalizingly.*) Good-morning, Mr. Pollard. [*Exit, R.*]

POL. It's Gale, Gale, all the time! Nothing to it but Verne Gale. I'd like to kick up a tempest that would blow him to kingdom come. (*Crosses to L.*)

Enter ALMIRA, from store ; stands in door. Enter IRV., R.

IRV. Oh, Pollard, you here? Mrs. Purdy, I wish to speak to your husband.

ALMIRA. Yes, sir, I'll call him.

[*Exit.*

IRV. Have you mailed those checks, Pollard?

POL. That's what I came down for, Mr. Irving.

(*Starts to go in store.*)

IRV. One moment, Pollard. (POL. *returns without speaking.*) Who closed the office last night?

POL. Miss Remington.

IRV. Miss Remington! How did that happen?

POL. She said she had some letters to write, so I didn't wait.

IRV. Was she alone?

POL. Adams was there, and Verne Gale came in before I left.

IRV. What did he want?

POL. He didn't say.

IRV. Was Gale there when you came away?

POL. Yes, sir.

IRV. That's all, Pollard ; I'll be at the office shortly.

[*Exit POL., R.*

Enter TIM from store. Comes down C.

TIM. Almiry says you want to see me. What is it? Anything new, Mr. Irving?

IRV. No, only I've learned that Gale was in my office last night after I went home.

TIM. Well, nothin' strange in that, is there, seein's he's kinder friendly like with your typewriter?

IRV. Possibly not ; but I —

TIM. What are you trying to drag Verne into this thing for? You don't think he's been takin' your money, do you?

IRV. I haven't said yet what I think.

TIM. Wal, you've given a mighty strong hint of what's in your mind. Now see here, Mr. Irving, Verne Gale's like an own son to me, an' if you're goin' to try to throw suspicion on him the sooner you git some one else to handle this job the better.

IRV. Don't be hasty, Purdy. You shouldn't let sentiment interfere with your duty.

(IRV., R. C. TIM., L. C.)

TIM. Sentiment! It's a darn shame there ain't more of it in our dealin's with one another.

IRV. Justice deals with facts, not feelings, Purdy.

TIM. Not always with facts, not by a jugful, Mr. Irving. Of course you've noticed that justice is always pictured out as a female, an' that's the way justice ought to be,—tender and kind an' helpful, jest like a good woman; but mind you, Mr. Irving, they blindfold her so she can't see the mean things that's done in her name.

IRV. I didn't come here to listen to a sermon, Purdy.

TIM. I ain't preachin'. I'm jest standin' out for fair play, that's all. What have you got against Verne Gale?

IRV. Nothing; but I'm determined to clear this matter up. I'm told that Gale is quite a sport.

TIM. Wal, he's fond of baseball, if that's what you mean, but he's honest, Verne Gale is. I'd stake my last dollar on him. He's as square as a die.

IRV. Perhaps he is, Purdy. I hope so for your sake, but I shall depend upon you to find out. *[Exit, R.]*

TIM. So it's Verne he has set upon as the thief. Guess the wish is father to the thought. Wal, 'tain't Verne, he's out of it. Now who in the name of Sam Hill is it?

(Scratches his head. Crosses—sits on bench. In deep thought as HIRAM enters with bundle of bats and mail bag, which he throws on platform of store.)

HIRAM. Express was a little late. There's Verne's bats,
Tim. *(Crosses to L.)*

TIM. All right.

Enter ALMIRA. Comes down c.

ALMIRA. What did Mr. Irving want, Tim?

TIM. Nothing much.

ALMIRA. Must be somethin' special; been down here twice to see you.

TIM. Yes, he has.

ALMIRA. Has what?

TIM. What you said.

ALMIRA. Said what?

(TIM, L. C. ALMIRA, C. HIRAM, R. C.)

HIRAM. You said Irving'd been down here twice, Almira.

ALMIRA. Yes; that's what I said. What for? Do you hear, Tim? What for?

TIM. For you to find out, by chowder. For goodness' sake, Almira, can't you leave me alone a minute?

ALMIRA. You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, Tim Purdy, or you'll find out something that won't be to your liking. I declare, Hiram, I'm afraid Tim's goin' to be sick. 'Tain't a bit like him to talk back to me that way.

[*Exits with mail bag.*]

HIRAM. Almiry's kinder cranky, ain't she? (TIM *doesn't answer.*) Why don't ye speak, Tim? Ain't sick, be ye?

TIM. No, jest thinkin', that's all.

HIRAM. Gosh, Tim, don't think too hard, it might go to your head. Speakin' 'bout thinkin', do you think marriage is a failure?

(*Crosses and stands by TIM, who is still seated.*)

TIM. I dunno, Hi, leastwise I ain't prepared to say.

HIRAM. I was readin' in the Swamproot Almanick t'other day. It says that marriage is worse than a failure; it's a panic.

TIM. Sometimes I think 'tis, that's a fact, Hi.

Enter ALMIRA, quietly.

HIRAM. Wal, mebbe 'tis; but seems to me it's flying in the face of Providence for you to say so, Tim.

(*ALMIRA walks quietly up behind them.*)

ALMIRA. For him to say what, Hiram?

TIM } Great Cæsar's ghost! (*Jumps up sud-*
(*together.*) } *denly.*)

HIRAM } Thunder and lightnin'! (*Crosses to L.*)

ALMIRA. Now what's this mixture of Shakespeare an' the weather report mean, I want to know? What're you talkin' about, you two?

TIM. The weather; that's it, the weather. Looks as if we might git a shower.

HIRAM. Yes, git hail with it, too, I'm afraid. Oh, Tim, as I was sayin' jest before Almiry cum in, I want a bag of dry mash. Here, Almiry, take it out of that.

(*Hands bill. Exit ALMIRA. TIM and HIRAM both give a deep sigh of relief.*)

TIM. Close call, Hi. Hens layin' well?

HIRAM. Fair to middlin'; nothin' like Uraliah Higgins', though. Last week one of his hens eat some tacks, an' the next day she laid a carpet.

TIM. Sho! You don't say!

HIRAM. No, I don't say so. That's what Uraliah said. He thinks his pertaters are goin' to turn out bad this year.

TIM. What's the matter with 'em?

HIRAM. He planted his onions right next to his pertaters, an' the onions make the pertaters' eyes water so much they're rottin' in the hill.

TIM. Uraliah oughter known better'n that.

HIRAM. That's so. Now he's gone into fruit raisin'. Says he's goin' to graft milkweed on to his strawberry plants. Expects to get strawberries and cream.

TIM. 'Twon't work, Hi, he won't git nothin' but sour milk if his strawberries are as sour's the ones he sold me.

Enter ALMIRA.

(TIM, R. C. ALMIRA, C. HIRAM, L. C.)

ALMIRA. I can't change this, Hiram. Ain't you got nothin' smaller?

TIM. Guess p'raps I can break it. What is it?

ALMIRA. A five. (*Hands bill to him.*)

TIM (*looking at bill carefully; starting; aside*). One of the stolen bills, as I'm a sinner. (*Aloud.*) Where'd you git this bill, Hiram?

HIRAM. Why, what's the matter? Good, ain't it?

TIM. Good enough, but I asked you where you got it

HIRAM. Got it from Verne Gale down to the depot.

TIM. Verne Gale? (*Aside.*) No, no, it can't be possible. I won't believe it. (*Aloud.*) Oh, I see! Yes, yes. The express on the bats.

ALMIRA. What's struck you all at once, Tim? Why don't you give me the change?

TIM. I'm goin' to, Almira. Confound it, can't you stop pesterin' me? (*Takes out bill-book from inside of vest. Gives ALMIRA small bills. Looks at marked bill carefully before placing it in pocketbook.*) There, Almira, guess you can fix Hiram up now. (*ALMIRA and HIRAM exeunt in store. TIM watches them off, then takes out bill again and examines it.*) It's

one of the marked bills, no doubt about that. Now where did Verne git it? That's the question. (*Stands c. Conversation outside: "The pennant's as good as ours now. We can't lose with Adams in the box, and Verne Gale for manager. No, that's right; they're all right."* GALE *outside: "Be on hand early this afternoon, boys."* "Sure; all right, we will," etc. TIM *crosses l. Enter GALE. Comes to c.*) Verne, you're jest the boy I want to see.

GALE. What's up now, Uncle Tim? You look excited.

TIM. Guess I am a little. (*Looks around to see that they are not overheard.*) Now I don't want ye to mention this to any one, Verne, not a single soul; but I've got a job on my hands, and I want you to help me out.

GALE. Why, certainly; what is it?

TIM. Some one broke into Irving's shoe factory last night and stole some money from his safe.

GALE. Last night? Why, that's strange. Wasn't Adams there?

TIM. I dunno; but anyway, Mr. Irving's sorter put matters into my hands to see if I can run down the thief.

GALE. Are you making any progress?

TIM. Wal, yes, a little. I've found one of the missing bills.

GALE. Good work, Uncle Tim. Who had it?

TIM. Hiram Rowell. (*Hesitates.*) He said you paid it to him.

GALE (*astonished*). I paid it to him! Why, yes, I paid him for the express, but that money wasn't stolen. You're on the wrong track, Uncle Tim.

TIM. By Judas, I hope I am, but here's the bill, an' it's one that Irving marked himself. See, there it is. (*Shows mark.*) Where'd you git it, Verne?

GALE. I got it from —— (*Aside.*) Great heavens! It's the money Hal Irving gave me, and I pledged my honor not to tell.

TIM. Can't you remember where ye got it, Verne?

GALE. Why, no—that is, let me think, Uncle Tim, let me think. (*Aside.*) Stolen money! And Hal gave it to me! Could he have—no, no, I won't believe it. (*Aloud.*) I can't tell you now, Uncle Tim, but I'll help you solve the mystery if you'll give me time.

TIM. You can't tell? You must, Verne! You must, for your own sake. Don't you see what a position it puts ye in?

GALE. I can't help it. There's a frightful mistake some-

where, but I'm not a thief, Uncle Tim! I don't need to tell *you* that.

TIM. Then you are trying to shield some one. It's goin' to look mighty black for you, Verne, if you don't explain.

Enter NEL., R., during last speech.

NEL. Explain what, Uncle Tim? What is it? What has happened, Verne?

(NEL., R. C. GALE, C. TIM, L. C.)

GALE. Oh, it's something I can't understand, Nell. I paid out some money to-day; money that was stolen from Mr. Irving's safe, so Uncle Tim tells me.

NEL. Money stolen, and you had it? But of course you can tell where you got it?

GALE. No, I can't, Nell! I can't explain. It's impossible!

TIM. But why, Verne?

GALE. Don't ask me why; don't ask me anything now.

Enter IRV., R.

IRV. Oh, I didn't expect to find you here, Gale. (*Glances at NEL.*) Your sister, I suppose?

GALE. Yes, Mr. Irving.

(*IRV. bows slightly. NEL. returns the recognition.*)

IRV. A very fortunate meeting, Purdy. Guess we can bring matters to a head right here.

TIM. I don't quite follow you, Mr. Irving.

IRV. Here is one of the stolen bills. (*Produces bill.*) It was paid to Adams, my watchman, by this young man.

(*Points to GALE.*)

TIM. Is that so, Verne?

GALE. I paid Adams some money, yes.

IRV. Where did you get it?

(NEL., R. C. IRV., C. GALE, L. C. TIM, L.)

GALE. I refuse to say.

IRV. Then you stole it from my safe.

NEL. No, no, Mr. Irving, he did not!

IRV. He has not denied it.

GALE. Deny it! Of course I deny it! I am not a thief.

IRV. Unless you explain matters, the evidence is very strong against you, Gale.

NEL. Oh, tell him, Verne; tell him all. If you are innocent you must explain.

GALE. If, Nell, *if*? Are you beginning to doubt me, too? (*Comes C.*)

IRV. How can she help it? You're in a pretty tight box.

NEL. Doubt you! No, no, Verne. I didn't mean that. (*Goes to GALE. IRV. crosses to R. front.*) Mr. Irving, my brother is not a thief. He's always been good and honest, hasn't he, Uncle Tim? (*TIM nods assent.*) Yes, everybody who knows Verne knows he's honest. I have no father or mother, Mr. Irving, only Verne, the best brother a girl ever had. He has never failed me, never disappointed me, never proved unworthy a sister's love. He never will, Mr. Irving, he never will!

(*Embraces GALE, her head on his shoulder. PETE enters R. U. E. during above speech.*)

TIM (*wiping eyes with red handkerchief*). That's right, Mr. Irving; it's jest as she says.

IRV. If he's such a paragon of virtue, where did he get the stolen bill? The money he paid Adams?

(*PETE comes down C.*)

PETE. I can answer that question, Mr. Irving.

ALL (*GALE excepted*). You, Adams?

GALE (*thrusting NEL. aside; advancing to PETE*). Adams, not a word if you value my friendship.

Positions:

NEL.

IRV.

PETE

GALE

TIM

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. As curtain rises lights are down, with moonlight effect. Store lighted. Boys heard singing, shouting and blowing horns outside. They may introduce specialties on stage if desired, retiring before ALMIRA and MAB. enter from store. During her dialogue with MAB., ALMIRA lights the lamp in the lamp-post at corner of store, and stage lights are turned on. At the end of act, where the shower is gathering the stage lights should be turned off gradually until only store lights and that on lamp-post are left burning. Time, evening of same day.*

Enter ALMIRA and MAB., from store.

ALMIRA. Good land! Them boys is enough to raise the dead. 'They've driv me most crazy with their carryin's on.

(Lights lamp on platform. Stage lights up.)

MAB. But they won the game; I don't wonder that they're noisy. I wish I were a boy; I'd fasten myself on to one of those horns so quick it would make your head swim.

ALMIRA. They're makin' my head swim without any of your help, Miss Remington. I wish Tim was here; he'd stop their racket mighty quick.

MAB. I'll bet he's out there celebrating with them.

ALMIRA. More likely he's traipsin' round with Mr. Irving. *(Comes L. C.)* Don't know what's goin' on between them two, do ye, Miss Remington?

MAB. *(R. C.)*. I am not curious about other people's affairs, Mrs. Purdy.

ALMIRA. No more am I; 'tain't my disposition. Besides, I don't have time.

MAB. People who have nothing to do but to meddle with other people's affairs are usually very busy, I've observed.

ALMIRA *(sharply)*. You're quite observin', ain't ye, Miss Remington? *(Goes to lamp post. Fixes light.)* But speakin' about the Irvings—Hal went away kinder sudden, didn't he?

MAB. Rather sudden, yes. *(Crosses to settee. Sits.)*

ALMIRA. What did he go for, business or pleasure?

(*Comes down L. C.*)

MAB. Yes.

ALMIRA (*puzzled*). That's what I thought. Don't know where he's gone, do ye?

MAB. No; I haven't the remotest idea.

ALMIRA. Gone away for his health?

MAB. Possibly.

ALMIRA. He looks well enough; what's the matter with him?

MAB. Heart trouble; very severe.

ALMIRA. Law me, how sad! I suppose Nell Gale's all upset.

MAB. I presume she is.

ALMIRA. Just think of it! Heart trouble's most always fatal. (*Dolefully.*) What a nice couple Hal Irving and Nellie Gale would 'a' made. They're both about the same temperature.

MAB. (*smothering a laugh*). You mean temperament, don't you, Mrs. Purdy?

ALMIRA. Wasn't that what I said? (*HIRAM heard singing outside.*) There's Hi Rowell, singin's ef he never had a care in the world. *His* wife got stung, all right. They say there's fifty-seven different varieties of stingers, an' he's all of 'em.

Enter HIRAM, R., *with mail-bag; comes down c.*

HIRAM. Howdy, Almiry. Evenin', Miss Remington. (*Lifts cap awkwardly.*) Big mail to-night, Almiry.

ALMIRA. Yes; an' Tim off nobody knows where, leavin' me with all o' his work on my hands.

HIRAM. Wal, I s'pose he figgers that he's sorter helpin' you out in a way; 'cause when he ain't here you don't hev quite so much *male* to look after, do ye, Almiry?

MAB. Is that a pun, Mr. Rowell?

HIRAM. Pretty good, ain't it?

(MAB., *on bench.* HIRAM, C. ALMIRA, L. C.)

ALMIRA. Not so bad, considerin' who made it. Wouldn't be s'prised ef Nancy was lookin' for *her* male, too. Second-class matter, though. That's a pun too, Hiram.

[*Exits laughing, mail-bag in her hand.*]

HIRAM. Almiry's bound to hev the last word. Wouldn't be a woman if she didn't.

MAB. Now, Mr. Rowell, that's unkind.

HIRAM. Wal, they all like to knock; that is, all I've seen. As Shakespeare says: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends rough, hev them as we may!" I cal'late William had wimmen in mind when he writ that, Miss Remington.

MAB. Are you fond of Shakespeare, Mr. Rowell?

HIRAM. Wal, I think he's all right on the woman question.

MAB. I'm afraid you're a pessimist.

HIRAM. No, I ain't. Fact is, I don't go to any church,—that is, not regular.

MAB. Then you're not religiously inclined?

HIRAM. Only when I'm sick. When a man's sick he wants some sort of religion an' a good woman in the house.

MAB. Yes, they are both necessary. This is a union church, isn't it, Mr. Rowell? (*Points to church.*)

HIRAM. Yes, that's what they call it. They're united in fightin' each other.

MAB. Is it possible?

HIRAM. Yes, fight like cats and dogs, sometimes. Got a pretty good sort of parson, though. He don't nieddle with nuther rum, politics or religion.

MAB. What does he preach about?

HIRAM. Mostly about wimmen's rights, I guess, from what I hear. Gosh, no need to tell wimmen what their rights are.

MAB. I hope you're not losing your faith in womankind, Mr. Rowell?

HIRAM. Wal, some o' the samples I've seen make me feel sort o' shaky, that's a fact. (*Lowers voice.*) Now, there's Almiry, for instance; nobody can't take no comfort when she's around.

MAB. (*aside*). Nobody can't. (*Aloud.*) So you don't envy Mr. Purdy?

HIRAM. Me? Wal, I guess not. (*Boys heard outside.*) The boys is sorter whoopin' her up to-night, ain't they?

MAB. Yes; wasn't it a glorious game?

HIRAM. I didn't see it, but it sounds that way. I hear your bookkeeper, Mr. Pollard, dropped quite a wad on it.

MAB. I'm glad he did; he deserves to lose, just for not backing the home team. (*Rises from settee.*)

HIRAM. By gosh, you're quite a sport, ain't ye? Wal, guess I'll mosey along. Nancy'll be lookin' for that second-

class matter Almiry was a-tellin' about. Good-night, Miss Remington. (*Starts to exit L. ; encounters POL.*) Evenin', Mr. Pollard. I hear ye got trimmed. Guess you're in wrong. No use to buck agin Verne Gale.

POL. Things will come my way some time, Rowell. I'll have my inning yet. (*Goes down C.* HIRAM L.)

HIRAM. I c'n sympathize with ye, Pollard. We've all been there, as Mark Twain said about the baby.

[*Exit L., chuckling.*]

MAB. You are not celebrating to-night, Mr. Pollard?

POL. I should say not.

MAB. The boys are. Aren't they jubilant?

POL. It's a regular rough-house. I suppose they think the immaculate Gale and his henchman Adams are the loud noise all right. They'll have another think when Irving puts Gale behind the bars.

MAB. He will never do that.

(MAB., R. C. POL., L. C.)

POL. Yes, he will ; just you wait and see. You'd better be prepared for a complete eclipse of your meteoric hero, Mabel.

MAB. Who ever heard of a meteoric eclipse?

POL. I bow before your superior knowledge. Your meteor will not be eclipsed, but annihilated.

MAB. Your attempts at brilliancy are painful, Mr. Pollard.

POL. Doubtless so to you. (*Enter PETE, R. ; nods coolly to POL., raises hat to MAB., and is about to exit in store when POL. speaks.*) Oh, I say, Adams, how do you like playing with a team that is backed with stolen money?

PETE. *Supposed* to have been stolen, you mean.

(*Comes C.* POL., L. C.)

POL. Well, *supposed* then. It'll amount to the same thing in the end.

PETE. Did it make any difference in my pitching to-day?

MAB. Well, I should say not, Adams.

POL. Wait till the boys hear about this Gale affair. The team will go all to pieces.

MAB. I suppose you will make it your business to advertise it?

POL. Why not? As correspondent of the *Brewster Gazette* I am expected to report all the news.

MAB. What! You are not going to have it printed?

POL. Certainly.

PETE. If you do, be careful what you say, or you'll answer to me for it.

POL. You? You're getting a swelled head, Adams. I could say most anything, and Verne Gale wouldn't deny it.

PETE. But I would.

MAB. And so would I.

POL. Of course *you* would, Mabel. Really I'm very sorry for you; your idol is shattered.

MAB. Save your sympathy for those who want it, and remember also that to *you* I am *Miss* Remington.

POL. Another chill. What is the next step in your freezing process?

MAB. Well, we will not discuss shattered idols, if you please.

PETE. No, leave that out, or you'll have a broken head to talk about.

POL. (*sneeringly*). Listen to the joke from the end man.

MAB. You'd better be careful, it may be no joke. Adams, I thank you. Mr. Pollard, I will bid you good-evening.

POL. Are you going, Mabel?

MAB. No; *Miss* Remington, if you please.

POL. Well, *Miss* Remington, if you insist; do you mean that——

PETE. She means in plain English, get out!

(*Motions POL. off.*)

POL. You think you stand pat with the hero and petticoat administration, don't you, Adams? And you, *Miss* Remington, you think Verne Gale is a paragon. He isn't; he's a thief, a self-convicted thief.

PETE. Pollard, you lie. (*Throttles him.*) Take back those words. (*They struggle, and PETE forces POL. to stage.*)

MAB. Uncle Tim! Quick!

Enter TIM, L. MAB. *runs in store.*

TIM. Hi, hi, there! What'n thunder's goin' on here? Here, stop it, Adams; stop it, I say! Great Scott, you'll choke him to death!

PETE. He deserves it. He called Verne a thief.

TIM. Here, git up, Pollard. (*Assists him to rise.*) Adams

didn't have no right to tackle ye, but by Judas, you'd better be careful how ye talk round here, or some one else'll git a-hold of ye.

(POL., R. TIM, C. PETE, L.)

POL. Talk! I'll talk all I please, Tim Purdy. So you're standing up for the village pet, too, are you? You'd better be ——

TIM. You'd better put the brakes on that tongue o' yours, Pollard. It's liable to git you into trouble.

POL. You can't shut me up, and your threats don't scare me either, Purdy. As for you, Adams, I'm not through with you.

PETE (*starting for* POL.). You can settle right now.

TIM (*restraining* PETE). Let him alone, Adams, he's a little engine with a big whistle. (*To* POL.) Now, Pollard, I'd advise you to go while you're in fairly good order an' condition. I shan't hold myself responsible for what might happen if you don't go right now.

POL. I'm going, Purdy, but you'll sing another song when Mr. Irving gets after you. He's got influence enough to have you fired out of this town body and soul.

TIM. Say, darn your picter, Pollard, it's agin human natur' to stan' any more o' this. Git now, or I'll make you walk Spanish. Do you hear? Git!

POL. You'll hear from me yet, Purdy.

(TIM *forces* POL. *off* R., *then returns*.)

TIM. Blamed if he didn't git me hot under the collar.

(MAB. *at store door*.)

(TIM, R. PETE, L.)

MAB. Is it all over?

TIM. Yes, the enemy has retreated for more ammunition.

PETE. I fear I'm to blame for all this.

MAB. Pollard got just what he deserved. We don't mind it a bit, do we, Mr. Purdy?

TIM (*doubtfully*). Wal, I dunno. I suppose I ought to give you a good talkin' to, Adams, but if you hadn't 'a' done it, it would 'a' been up to me, I guess, so we'll call it square. While you was about it, though, I wish you'd 'a' plunked him a good one for me,—just *one*.

MAB. Why, Uncle Tim, I'm surprised ; and you are chief of police, too !

TIM. Yes, I know ; but I don't work at it every day, an' this is one of my off days.

MAB. I hope you'll have them often. My, I'm so nervous I can't keep still. If you see Nellie will you tell her to come up to the house, please, Uncle Tim ?

TIM. Yes, if I can remember to. I'm sorter stirred up myself. (*Exit MAB., R.*) I'd advise you to keep an eye on Pollard. He may do you harm.

PETE. I'm not afraid of him, but he would lose no chance to injure Verne.

TIM. I know that. He's workin' hand an' glove with Irving to make out that Verne took that money.

PETE. But he didn't ! Verne is innocent. I know it. I can swear to it.

TIM. If you are so dead certain about it, what's the use of keepin' your mouth shet ?

PETE. I *can't* say anything ; Verne won't let me ! I suppose he knows what he's about. We'll have to let him alone.

TIM. Let him alone ! Oh, yes, that's easy enough said, but how are we a-goin' to stand Irving off, an' him set on havin' Verne locked up ?

PETE. I can't help it. It's no use for me to argue with him, if his own sister and Miss Remington can't coax it out of him. But Verne shall never be arrested, Mr. Purdy. I'll tell everything rather than that, promise or no promise. [*Exit, R.*]

TIM. It's plain enough that Adams knows who took the money, an' by heck I ain't a-goin' to rest until I find out who 'tis. (*Picks up pocketbook dropped by POL. in scuffle.*) Hullo ! A pocketbook. (*Opens it.*) Pollard's. Must have dropped it when Adams shut off his wind. (*Continues to examine contents.*) Whew ! Pretty well fixed. Must get a good salary and be savin' of his money. Some of the boys call him a "tight-wad." (*Foot-steps outside. TIM puts pocketbook in coat pocket. TIM, C. Enter POL., R. ; looks around stage.*) Lost anythin', Mr. Pollard ?

POL. (*surlily*). I've lost my pocketbook.

TIM. Is this it ? (*Produces book.*)

POL. Yes, that's mine.

TIM. No doubt about it ?

POL. Certainly not. I guess I know my own pocketbook when I see it.

TIM. It's a pretty fat one. (*Hands book.*) Ef I's you, Pollard, I wouldn't carry so much money around in my hip pocket. (POL. *starts off without thanking TIM.*) You're quite welcome. (*Exit POL.*) I didn't expect any thanks anyway. Stands to reason he ain't got no great love for me. (R.)

ALMIRA (*from store door*). Back, be ye?

TIM. Looks that way, don't it?

ALMIRA. Now you jest walk yourself in here an' tell me what you've been up to all day. (TIM *doesn't answer.*) Did you hear me speak?

TIM. Sure! Nothin' new to hear *you* speak.

[*Exit in store.*]

Enter GALE and PETE, R.

GALE. Now, Adams, tell me what you meant by your dramatic statement to Mr. Irving this forenoon.

PETE. I wanted Irving to know where you got that money.

GALE. Do *you* know?

PETE. Yes; Hal Irving gave it to you.

GALE. Careful, Adams, not so loud. Well, admitting that, what then? You don't think he—he —

PETE. Stole it? I'm afraid he did. I saw him take some money from his father's safe.

GALE (*amazed*). You *saw* him! You say you *saw* him, Adams?

(PETE, R. C. GALE, L. C.)

PETE. Yes; but I gave it no thought at the time.

GALE. Tell me about it, tell me everything. There is, there *must be* some mistake. What did you see?

PETE. Well, quite late last night, say half-past nine or ten, Hal and his father came into the office. They talked quite a while and both got very excited, Hal especially.

GALE. Talked about what?

PETE. The Western trip. Hal didn't want to go.

GALE. Do you know why?

PETE. I heard your sister's name mentioned several times.

GALE. Well, what then?

PETE. Then they went out together. Later Hal came back alone. I was in the shipping room and through the window I saw him go to the safe and open it. I went into the office. When Hal saw me he said, "Hello, Adams, I

thought you were in the engine room." I talked with him a minute or two and went back into the shipping room. In a little while Hal opened the door, said good-night and went out.

GALE. But did you *see* him take any *money*? Are you sure of that?

PETE. Yes, I saw him. Why, of *course* he took it, Verne; he gave you some of it.

GALE (*as if to himself*). Hal, old boy, I'm afraid you've got us both into a bad mess. (*To PETE.*) What was Hal doing when he saw you?

PETE. He was counting some bills.

GALE. You didn't see him close the safe?

PETE. No, I didn't stay. I didn't think it strange that he was there. He frequently comes in evenings, but when I heard about the robbery it all came back to me. Why didn't you let me speak, Verne?

GALE. Because Hal is my friend; because to my sister he is—well, you know what they are to each other. Do you realize what it would mean to Nell if she thought Hal took that money?

PETE. Whose good name would she value most, yours or Hal Irving's?

GALE. She *knows* I'm innocent. Hal is not here to defend himself; we must stand by him for Nell's sake.

PETE. Well, don't run away with the idea that I'm going to stand around like a dummy and hear Irving throw it into you like he did this forenoon.

GALE. Yes, you are; you must.

PETE. And let you be called a *thief*? What will your friends say?

GALE. My *friends* will stand by me. I can get along without the others. Now keep quiet.

PETE. All right, if you say so, but you'll have to muzzle me if I hear any more talk from Irving or Pollard. I've had one little argument with Pollard already.

GALE. What's wrong with Pollard?

PETE. Look out for him; he's no friend of yours.

GALE. I'm open to congratulations.

PETE. It's no joke; he's underhanded and tricky. He'd do most anything to throw you down.

GALE. Pshaw, Adams. Stop your croaking!

(*They cross.* GALE, R.; PETE, L.)

PETE. I'm not croaking; you don't understand, Verne. You're white through and through; so white that you would sacrifice your own good name to save Hal Irving's. So white that you treat *me* like a brother; *me*, a *nigger*, as Pollard calls me. I *am* a *nigger*, but I am white enough to be loyal to the best friend I've got, and I'm going to stand by you, Verne; I'm going to fight for you to the finish.

GALE (*grasping PETE's hand; with feeling*). White enough to be loyal to your best friend. Ah, Adams, old sport, there are *white* men who are not white enough for that. But tell me, Adams, how did that five I paid you get around to Mr. Irving so quickly?

PETE. I asked Miss Remington to change it for me. Mr. Irving found it in the money drawer, and when he asked me where I got it, I told him. I did not know about the robbery then.

GALE. Of course not; that's all right. I just wanted to know, that's all.

Enter TIM.

TIM. No use tryin' to keep anythin' from Almiry. She wouldn't give me a minute's peace till I told her the whole story.

(GALE, R. C. TIM, C. PETE, L. C.)

GALE. It doesn't matter, Uncle Tim; it'll soon be town talk, anyway. We must make the best of it.

TIM. I don't suppose it's any use to try to reason with ye, Verne, but it *does* seem to me that in justice to your sister and yourself, not to mention the rest of us, you ought to clear this thing up.

GALE. In justice to my sister and myself, I can't, Uncle Tim. Come along, Adams. [*Exeunt both.*]

TIM. In justice to his sister and himself, he *can't*. Now, what in timenation did he mean by that? (*Meditates.*) I wonder, I jest wonder, now, if —

Enter HIRAM, L.

HIRAM. Anythin' new 'bout the robbery, Tim?

TIM. No; who told you about it?

HIRAM. Pollard; he says no doubt Verne Gale did it. I think more likely 'twas the nigger.

TIM. Adams? Not much.

HIRAM. Yes-sir-ree! He's the man, I bet ye.

TIM. You'd like mighty well to make him out a rascal, wouldn't ye, Hi?

HIRAM. Wal, I'd pick him for a crook sooner'n I would Verne Gale. Who had a better chance to take the money, tell me that?

TIM. Pollard had, for that matter.

HIRAM. Verne wouldn't have no object in shieldin' Pollard, would he? Pollard ain't no friend o' his, I reckon. Might as well try to lay it onto Hal Irving.

TIM. Hal Irving? (*Aside.*) I was jest wondering. (*Aloud.*) Hal Irving, did you say?

HIRAM. Yes; I hear that he an' his father ain't on the best of terms lately.

TIM. You mustn't pay any attention to what gossips say, Hi.

HIRAM. Wal, I got this from your wife, Tim. Anyway, I guess you'll find the nigger's the thief, all right. 'Tain't none o' my business, though; I ain't workin' on the job.

TIM. No, that's right.

HIRAM. I can't see's anybody's makin' much headway on it for that matter.

TIM. Now you jest stop your knockin', Hi Rowell. I cal'late I'm capable of handlin' this affair.

HIRAM. Oh, yes, you're capable. Flyin' machines is capable of flyin', but they don't allus fly. [*Exit in store.*]

TIM. Hi is all-fired tantalizin'. (*Meditates.*) Hal Irving! By heck, I don't know of a livin' soul that Verne Gale would be more likely to stand up for than Hal. It's somethin' to work on.

Enter GALE, R.

GALE. Some of the boys are giving me the cold shoulder already. It's a bad mess, isn't it?

TIM. Bad for somebody, but I've got a clue that lets you out.

GALE. Heavens! Has Adams said anything?

TIM. Not yet, but he'll tell everythin' before he'll see you arrested.

GALE. He must not! For heaven's sake, Uncle Tim, let Adams alone. Isn't it enough for me to stand for this without dragging any one else into it?

TIM. I want to prove your innocence, Verne.

GALE. I know you do, but this is a muddle that you can't straighten out.

TIM. I've got to do somethin' to stand Irving off. He's bound to have you arrested.

GALE. No, no, Uncle Tim, he must not. You must not let him. He cannot force the truth from me, but I'm not so sure of Adams.

TIM. I'll do all I can for you, Verne, but Irving's bound to make trouble for you.

GALE. I know he is. It isn't the money, that's nothing to him. He wants to disgrace me. He is striking at my honor; he's using a dangerous weapon, Uncle Tim. We must see to it that it does not reach his *own* heart.

TIM. I doubt if he's got one, but somehow I don't quite follow you in that last remark o' yours.

(GALE, R. C. TIM, L. C.)

GALE. It was nothing. Don't heed what I'm saying. I'm tired, so tired, Uncle Tim. The game and all, you know; my head is splitting.

TIM. I don't wonder at it. I can't make head nor tail of this affair, Verne, but your old Uncle Tim's with you, heart and soul, through thick and thin, remember that.

(*They cross.*)

GALE. Uncle Tim (*with emotion*), I can't thank you now; there's a great big lump right here. (*Points to throat.*) Oh, I wish all hearts were as great and kind as yours. It would be a different world for a lot of poor boys. But I'll make good, Uncle Tim; you'll never have reason to be ashamed of Verne Gale, and Nell can look Mr. Irving in the face and tell him that whether she ever bears his family name or not, she has a brother who will maintain the honor of her own.

[*Exit, R.*]

TIM. A guilty boy would never talk that way. Verne's innocent; I'll stake my life on it. He's shieldin' somebody, I don't know who nor what for; but I'll find out, and I'll make somebody smart for it.

[*Exit.*]

(*Dialogue between HIRAM and ALMIRA in store. Speak clearly and distinctly.*)

HIRAM. Got any new records, Almiry?

ALMIRA. Yes, some slick ones; came yesterday. Jest listen to this.

(Xylophone solo, "Mocking Bird." HIRAM comes out and sits in chair by door while record is playing.)

HIRAM. Say, Almiry, what sort of a instrument is that?

Enter ALMIRA.

ALMIRA. It's a zillyphone. Good, ain't it?

HIRAM. Pretty fair; kinder stutters some, though, don't it?

ALMIRA. Stutters, you numbhead! No, that's the way they play it. A man stands up an' jest hits pieces of wood with little mallets. That's what does it. *(Comes down L.)*

HIRAM. Oh, git out! You couldn't git no noise like that out o' sticks of wood.

ALMIRA. Wal, I never heard no noise of any kind in your wood-pile, Hiram.

HIRAM. Smart, ain't ye? *(Rises, comes down L. C.)* I don't see what Tim wants a talkin' machine for anyway, less'n you're goin' on a vacation.

ALMIRA. Wal, I ain't goin' on no vacation, Hi Rowell; I'm goin' to stay right here an' tend store an' sort mail till Tim gits this robbery business settled.

HIRAM. Wal, 's I said before, it don't stand to reason that Verne Gale did it.

ALMIRA. No, an' I don't believe Adams did, either. I tell ye who the thief is, Hiram; it's that Remington girl, that's who 'tis. She's a sassy little hussy, anyway.

HIRAM. Now *I* think she's a mighty clever gal. She speaks up kinder pert once in a while, but I'll bet she's honest. No, Almiry, no white person ever took that money. The nigger stole it. It'll come out jest as I say. Now you see.

ALMIRA. You needn't talk to me; I've had my suspicions o' that girl from the time I fust sot eyes on her. She stole the money an' Verne found it out. Now he's riskin' his good name to protect her. It's jest like him. What Verne Gale can see about that impudent jade to go crazy over is more'n I can make out.

HIRAM. Wal, if Mabel Remington stole that money she's

playin' Verne for a sucker all right. As Shakespeare says : " Natur' makes some men fools all the time, but wimmen make all men fools some o' the time." P'raps Verne's gettin' his lesson right now.

ALMIRA. I ain't much on Shakespeare, but so far's fools is concerned *I* wouldn't try to improve on what natur' has done for most o' the men I know.

HIRAM. Wal, you fooled *one* man all right.

ALMIRA. Who ?

HIRAM. Tim.

ALMIRA. *No, sir !* Tim had his wisdom teeth cut when he married *me* ; most sensible thing he ever did.

HIRAM. I never heard Tim say so ; but that's neither here nor there.

ALMIRA. No, an' bein' a family affair it's none of your business anyway ; but don't ye forgit, Hi Rowell, that Mabel Remington stole that money.

HIRAM. Don't talk to me ! I'll bet ye a pint o' peanuts that Adams did it.

ALMIRA (*severely*). You know well enough that I never gamble ; it's agin my principles.

HIRAM. No, you ain't got no sportin' blood ; all you c'n do is *talk*, jest talk.

ALMIRA. I c'n do somethin' besides talk. Actions speak louder'n words. (*Gets broom.*) Now you light out. (*Flourishes broom.*) Git now !

HIRAM. Put up your broom ; I was only foolin'. Play me jest one more record, then I'll go.

(ALMIRA, R. C. HIRAM, L. C.)

ALMIRA. You don't deserve it, but they say music has charms to soothe the savage beast, so I'll try it on you.

HIRAM. That's it, that's it, rub it in ! It's no sorter use to talk with you, Almiry ; you allus git the last word. Now let the *machine* have a show.

ALMIRA (*going inside*). Here's a good one, Hi. " Moonlight on the Lake."

(*As the record is played boys and girls with horns, flags, etc., come in one by one and listen attentively. At finish they express approval in a noisy way. Exit HIRAM, R.*)

Enter MAB., R.

MAB. It was a great victory, boys. You did yourselves proud.

VOICE. What's the matter with the Westvale nine?

(MAB., C. BOYS, L.)

ALL. That's all right.

(*Horns, cheers, waving of flags, etc.*)

VOICE. Three cheers for Manager Gale. Whoop 'er up !
One, two, three.

MAB. Now three more for Adams and his curves.

VOICE. You bet, he's all to the good.

MAB. (*flourishing flag*). One, two, three. (*At last flourish*
IRV. *enters R., and MAB., not seeing him, hits him with the*
flag. MAB., embarrassed.) Oh, Mr. Irving, I beg your
pardon.

IRV. What is this, a class in physical culture?

MAB. No, sir, vocal culture.

IRV. What's all this noise about, Miss Remington?

VOICE. About over, I guess.

(*The crowd gradually withdraws and leaves IRV. and MAB.*
alone.)

(IRV., R. C. MAB., L. C.)

MAB. We're celebrating. Our club won again to-day.

IRV. *Our* club.

MAB. Yes, the Westvales. It's a dandy team.

IRV. A *what*?

MAB. A fine team, sir ; everybody is rooting for it.

IRV. Rooting?

MAB. I mean everybody is enthusiastic over it. We've
won eight games out of eleven.

IRV. Indeed ! Are you one of the *rooters*?

MAB. Yes, sir ! Are you making fun of me?

IRV. No, indeed. I rather like your loyal spirit. Does it
extend to the club's manager also?

MAB. Yes, certainly.

IRV. You and Verne are pretty good friends, aren't you?

MAB. Why, yes, that is, we were schoolmates, and of
course —

IRV. (*meaningly*). Yes, of course. Well, that's all right,
only don't carry your loyalty too far.

MAB. I don't see how any one can be *too* loyal to their friends.

IRV. Friends sometimes prove unworthy. Now take Verne Gale for instance.

MAB. Ah, now I understand what you mean, Mr. Irving. Do you think Verne Gale took your money?

IRV. I have no doubt about it.

MAB. (*with spirit*). Well, I have, Mr. Irving.

IRV. It is very easy for a young girl to make mistakes.

MAB. It is easy for *any one* to make mistakes. *You* are mistaken, if you think Verne Gale is a thief.

IRV. If he isn't, why doesn't he prove his innocence? Why doesn't he tell where he got that money?

Enter NEL., L.

MAB. He will prove his innocence; he told me so.

IRV. And you believed him?

MAB. Believed him? Of course I did! Verne is innocent, and I'll help him prove it, let the guilt fall where it may, even if it be upon your own son.

IRV. Silence, Miss Remington. (*Sternly.*) You must not couple my son's name with this affair, even by a chance remark.

NEL. (*coming down*). You are right, Mr. Irving.

MAB. What, Nell, you here?

(IRV., R. C. NEL., C. MAB., L. C.)

NEL. Yes, dear. Mr. Irving, you are jealous of your son's good name. Do you think my brother's honor is less precious to me? You are a wealthy man. Your son does not know what poverty means. I pray God he never will, but *Verne* knows; I know. We have fought it together. It has made a man of Verne, Mr. Irving, a man strong and self-reliant. Do you think he would dishonor his young manhood, sacrifice *my* trust in him, lose the respect of his friends by doing a mean or dishonest act?

IRV. The evidence answers your question, Miss Gale.

NEL. But you don't know Verne, Mr. Irving; you don't *know him*. Oh, if you only did, you would see how impossible it would be for him to do such a thing. What can I say to *make you* understand?

IRV. (*coldly*). Nothing, Miss Gale. Spare yourself.

(NEL. *crosses*; *comes down to settee.*)

NEL. No, I'll not spare myself, Mr. Irving. You shall yet see Verne as *I* see him, *as he is*, good, noble, honest. (*Pleadingly.*) Mr. Irving, I am a stranger to you ; the story of our struggles cannot interest you, but remember, I am pleading for my brother, for his good name, and I ask you to listen. Will you, Mr. Irving, will you listen patiently for a moment ?

IRV. (*looking at watch*). Go on.

(*L., music ; "Departed Days."*)

NEL. (*as if to herself*). Oh, how clearly it all comes back to me. It was in the spring time, Mr. Irving ; Verne had given up his school and found work in a factory town. I will not worry you with the circumstances which made this necessary. He had never been away from home before, never left us alone, and that bright morning after he had said good-bye to father and mother, I walked down to the station to see him off. As we turned from the garden path we looked back at our little home. Mother, brave little mother, stood in the door waving her farewell, pausing only to wipe the tears from her eyes. Father was at the open window, his hand raised as if in silent benediction. There they were, *our* father and mother, heart-sore and sad, each hiding from the other the pain that was in that parting. Verne was brave, as he always is, but his eyes filled with tears. He took my hand in his and said : " Little sister, I don't know what I'm going to face, but I'm going to *make good*. I shall live with the thought of those dear eyes always upon me as they are now." (*Speaks brokenly.*) There are two vacant chairs in our home now, Mr. Irving, but Verne has not forgotten ; he can look father and mother in the face when — (*Breaks down.*) Oh, it's cruel of you, Mr. Irving, to—to — (*Sits on settee ; hides face in hands.*)

IRV. Really, Miss Gale, you must control yourself. You are making this unfortunate affair very disagreeable for me, and very painful for yourself. I must bid you good-evening.

[*Exit, R.*]

(*MAB. goes to NEL.*)

MAB. (*half crying*). The mean old wretch ! His heart is as hard as a boarding-house biscuit. Come, Nell, let's go home.

(*NEL. is drying her eyes with handkerchief. Distant thunder heard.*)

NEL. (*timidly*). Was that thunder, Mabel?

MAB. I think so. (*Dull flash and quite loud thunder.*)
Yes, there it is again. It's coming nearer.

Enter ALMIRA from store.

ALMIRA. That's gettin' pretty close, ain't it? My goodness, girls, don't stand under that tree.

Enter HIRAM hurriedly, R.

HIRAM. It's goin' to be a cracker. It's been comin' up all day. Nancy'll be scairt blue. (*Hurries off L.*)

ALMIRA. Nothin' short o' chain lightnin' would make Hiram speed up like that. (*Vivid flash, loud thunder.*) That wasn't far off, was it?

NEL. No, it's coming nearer; see how black and angry the clouds are. Soon the storm will break. Ah, Mabel, that's what life has been for me; clouds and storm and a little sunshine; but always *some clouds*. I wonder if there'll ever be the clear blue sky and the sunshine of a perfect day for me?

(Flash and thunder at same time.)

ALMIRA (*screaming*). Tim! Tim! Where be ye? Here, girls, git in here, quick. (*Pushes them in store.*) That struck somewhere, I know it did. Tim! Tim-o-thee! (*Reflection of fire on stage.*) What's that, a fire? 'Tis as sure as gospel. For mercy's sake, where is everybody?

(Shouts and confusion outside; if practical, sound of fire department responding to bell alarm. Reflection on stage grows brighter.)

TIM (*outside*). Come on, boys, quick! Everybody! (*Enters hurriedly.*) Get my rubber coat quick, Almira; the shoe factory's struck an' burnin' like tinder.

(TIM, R. C. ALMIRA, L. C. NEL. and MAB., L.)

(For curtain call ALMIRA is seen helping TIM on with coat. Business. NEL. and MAB. have old shawls or water-proofs, and are preparing to go to the fire. Thunder and flash ad lib.)

(TIM, R. C. ALMIRA, C. MAB., L. C. NEL., L.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as before. Time: Afternoon, five days later.*
NEL.'s birthday. *As curtain rises phonograph is playing "Sweetest Story Ever Told," Edison Amberol Record, by Venetian Trio. NEL. comes from store, letter in hand, crosses to bench R., sits, opens letter and reads. She should indicate by action and expression that the letter at first interests, then mystifies, until the full meaning of it, as revealed later, dawns upon her. Here is an opportunity for NEL. to do some excellent work in pantomime and facial expression. A careful study of high-class moving pictures will show what can be accomplished in situations of this character. As music stops, HIRAM speaks to ALMIRA, who is in store.*

HIRAM. Thet's a good one, Almiry, mighty good. What's the name of that piece?

Enter ALMIRA, fashion paper in hand.

ALMIRA. "Oh, tell me that you love me, for that's the sweetest story ever told."

HIRAM. Guess not! You'll have to excuse me, Almiry. I couldn't tell a lie!

ALMIRA. You great numbhead! That's the name of the record.

HIRAM. Oh, that's it!

ALMIRA. *You love me!* The idee! Jest let me ketch you at it.

HIRAM. You never will, Almiry! Don't lose no sleep over that. *(Interests himself in paper.)*

ALMIRA *(coming down L. C., watching NEL. a moment curiously)*. Finished your letter, Nell?

(NEL., preoccupied, doesn't answer.)

HIRAM *(looking up)*. Guess from the way she acts it must be one o' them "sweetest story ever told" sort o' letters.

ALMIRA. Now you stop naggin' Nell.

HIRAM. I ain't naggin'; guess I c'n say what I think, can't I?

ALMIRA. Wal, 'tain't no concern o' yourn, anyway. *(Opens*

magazine.) I hope teacher won't come for this till I've read it through. (*Crosses over to NEL.*) Look, Nell, ain't the new hats somethin' elegant? I'm goin' to hev my straw done over.

(*ALMIRA comes over to NEL.*)

NEL. (*rising and speaking nervously*). Please excuse me, Mrs. Purdy. I can't—oh, I must go now.

ALMIRA. Why, what's the matter, Nell?

NEL. Don't ask me; I can't tell you now. I can't talk about it. [*Exit hurriedly, R.*]

(*ALMIRA crosses to L. Turns to HIRAM.*)

ALMIRA (*impressively*). Now what do you suppose that means, Hiram? Bad news, I bet ye.

HIRAM. Guess the music was too much for her.

(*Rises, comes down to bench.*)

ALMIRA. 'Tain't nothin' to joke about; there's trouble somewhere; I c'n feel it in the air. (*Sits on bench.*)

HIRAM. You're foolish to feel for it; it'll find ye quick enough. (*Looks at paper.*) Wonder what the *Gazette's* got for Westvale news this week?

ALMIRA. It never has much, an' what it does print ain't half true.

HIRAM. Let's see. (*Reads aloud.*) Uraliah Higgins of Westvale spent the week-end in Brewster. (*Looks up.*) Huh. I'll bet that's all he did spend except his car fare.

ALMIRA. Uraliah ain't to blame; he has to figger mighty close to make both ends meet.

HIRAM. Don't you believe it. He's got money enough. He's close, Uraliah is; it's jest as he told a feller t'other day. One of them city chaps was over to Uraliah's tryin' to sell him a automobile. "No, sir," says Uraliah, "I've been vaccinated in my pocketbook, an' it took." (*Enter POL., R.*) Look here, Pollard, be you the feller that writes up the Westvale news?

POL. Yes; I am the local representative of the *Gazette*.

HIRAM. Healthy representative you be. Anybody'd think to read this here piece about the ball game that you're rootin' for the Brewster nine; you don't give our boys a square deal.

POL. What's the matter—do you want me to throw a lot of bouquets?

(HIRAM, R. C. POL., C. ALMIRA, L. C.)

HIRAM. Wal, I think it pays in the long run to tell things about as they are.

ALMIRA. That's what I say. Now, that piece about the shoe factory fire didn't mention Verne Gale's name at all.

POL. So you are also a hero worshipper, Mrs. Purdy?

ALMIRA. Wal, I'd never git down on my knees to you.

POL. I should hope not.

ALMIRA. Don't git sassy, young fellow. As for the news, we want it jest as it is, as Hiram says.

HIRAM. That's right, Almiry. Now, here's something about the fire that reads right and is right. Jest listen to this, Pollard. It starts in: "Mr. Editor: Writing for papers isn't in my line, but when news is printed about Westvale, we folks that live here want it printed right. That is, some of us do." There, Pollard, Almiry and me ain't the only ones that think so.

POL. Never mind; go on.

HIRAM. Let me see, where was I? Oh, here: "Now, for instance, in the piece about the shoe factory fire Saturday night, your paper didn't say a word about what a brave thing Verne Gale did. All it said was that Irving was overcome by smoke and was rescued by firemen. Now, we have got a good fire company here in Westvale, and they worked hard, but, Mr. Editor, the hero at that fire was Verne Gale." Hear that, Pollard?

POL. Yes; I expected that would come next.

HIRAM. Wal, it ought to. Here's some more: "Mr. Irving went into his office and it wasn't a minute before it was filled with smoke, thick and black. When Gale heard about it he rushed in and found Mr. Irving on the floor most suffocated. Gale dragged him out jest in time to save his life. These are the straight facts, Mr. Editor, and *facts* are what we want over here in Westvale. That is, most of us do, as I said before. Yours respectfully, Timothy Purdy." There, Pollard, that's the way we want our news!

(*Rises. POL. and HIRAM cross.*)

POL. I see! You want a lot of complimentary nonsense about a crook.

ALMIRA. Verne Gale ain't no crook.

HIRAM. We know well enough who the thief is.

ALMIRA. Besides, Irving ain't goin' to do anythin' about it, anyway.

POL. He hasn't changed his mind about who took the money, though.

ALMIRA. I guess if the truth was known he'd change it mighty sudden.

POL. What do you mean?

ALMIRA. Leave it to Tim. He ain't lettin' no grass grow under his feet, even if he ain't sayin' much.

POL. What's Purdy dug up now?

ALMIRA. Mr. Purdy, from those who are not his betters, young man.

HIRAM. Stung, Pollard! But you ain't answered his question, Almiry!

ALMIRA. I ain't givin' away any secrets.

HIRAM. I never knew ye to keep one.

ALMIRA. Wal, I'm keepin' this one. So far's you're concerned, Mr. Pollard, we all know what makes you so bitter agin Verne Gale.

POL. Indeed!

ALMIRA. Yes, you're jealous because Verne cut you out with Mabel Remington.

POL. Nonsense!

HIRAM. Verne didn't cut him out, Almiry; Pollard never had a look in with Mabel.

POL. Cut that, you country bumpkin. You're getting altogether too personal.

HIRAM. Country bumpkin, am I? By Judas, I'd rather be a country bumpkin than a city bum.

ALMIRA. Don't git excited, Hiram! Keep cool, keep cool!

HIRAM. I'm cool enough, but I ain't a-goin' to allow no imitation of a man to throw aspersions on my character.

POL. Bravo! Bravo!

ALMIRA. Guess you must 'a' got that word from teacher, Hi. He ain't throwed nothin' at ye that won't come off.

HIRAM. Oh, you can "bravo, bravo," all you darn please, Pollard. You an' Irving come down here with the idea that we're a lot of Jays an' Rubes. We ain't. We may look it, but we ain't. We know beans, an' we c'n tell a bad egg when we see it. You ain't fooled us none.

POL. Wise people keep their mouths shut, Rowell. You and—some others (*looking sharply at ALMIRA*) talk too much.

ALMIRA. Meanin' me, I suppose?

POL. You've guessed it.

ALMIRA. If I have anythin' to say, I say it.

POL. Doesn't the proverb say, "He that controlleth his tongue is greater than he who taketh a city"?

ALMIRA. Yes, *he*. Nothing said about a woman.

HIRAM. No; can't expect a woman to hold her tongue.

POL. (*aside*). Score one for the Rube.

ALMIRA. Shut up, Hiram. This ain't your funeral.

Enter TIM and PETE, R.

(POL., R. PETE, R. C. TIM, C. HIRAM, L. C. ALMIRA, L.)

TIM. Hi, they want you down to the depot.

HIRAM. What is it, a teaming job?

TIM. Yes. (HIRAM *exits* R. POL. *starts to follow*.) Wait a minute, Pollard. (PETE *comes down* R. POL. *comes back to* TIM. TIM, *to* ALMIRA.) Verne been here this morning?

ALMIRA. Ain't seen him.

TIM. Wish you'd see if you c'n find him an' tell him to come right over here.

ALMIRA. What's up now?

TIM. Never mind; find Verne Gale.

ALMIRA. You needn't be so close-mouthed about it.

(*Exits in store, comes out with old sunbonnet on, crosses stage and exits* R. *Watches TIM and others closely as she goes out*.)

POL. (*looking at watch*). You'll have to excuse me. I've stayed too long already.

(PETE, R. C. POL., C. TIM, L. C.)

TIM. I ain't disputin' that, but we'll have to git along with your company a spell longer.

POL. I'm not going to remain here to be insulted.

TIM. You're goin' to stay here an' hear what I've got to say. Adams has been telling me things that I'd like to have you explain.

POL. Adams had better be careful. What is this fairy story, anyway?

PETE. It's no fairy story.

TIM. Adams says you tried to bribe him to play crooked ball the other day.

POL. It's a lie.

PETE. It's the truth.

POL. It's his word against mine ; which goes, Purdy ?

TIM. Adams' every time.

POL. (*sneeringly*). Oh, of course.

TIM. Your word ain't cuttin' much ice with me, Pollard. But that ain't all. Uraliah Higgins was over to Brewster Sunday, an' he got wind of some of your crooked work over there. You tried to hire their pitcher to put Verne and Adams out of the game with some of his wicked inshoots, but you ——

POL. That's another ——

TIM. No, 'tain't, Pollard. 'Tain't no use to deny it. We've been over there, Adams an' I, an' got the whole story with witnesses to prove it. The Brewster boys want the championship, an' they want it bad, but they want to win it fair an' square.

POL. It's a cock and bull story that you and Adams have fixed up.

PETE. It's true, every word.

TIM. You look like a mighty cheap sport to me, Pollard, actin' so darn mean just because Mabel Remington give you the mitten. Nice man you'd make for a good girl.

POL. Nice man ! You talk about a nice man ! What sort of a fellow is Verne Gale ? A thief, isn't he ? A thief ; you don't deny it !

PETE. Pollard, you've called Verne Gale a thief for the last time. I know who the thief is. I saw him take the money !

POL. (*startled*) You know—you saw—saw who ?

TIM. Yes, Adams, saw who ?

PETE. Harold Irving !

POL. *Harold Irving ?*

TIM. I thought so ; I thought so all the time. There, Pollard, your gun is spiked. Now you'd better keep your mouth shut if you want to keep out of trouble.

POL. That's another one of Adams' bluffs.

PETE. It's the truth, and Verne Gale knows it.

TIM. Guess that's right. Oh, say, Pollard, here's a conundrum for ye. Do you know what the leopard said to the lion when he saw Theodore Roosevelt a-comin' through the jungle with his gun ?

POL. I've no time to fool with conundrums. What's the answer ?

TIM. The leopard said, " I'm goin' to beat it ; I'm spotted."

See the point, Pollard? Better not wait. When the boys git a-hold of your deviltry our police force won't be strong enough to protect ye. I'd advise you to pack your grip and light out on the first train. You're spotted!

POL. If I go you'll hear from me before I get out.

TIM. All right, but make your farewells short. (*Exit POL.*) Adams, you're a brick.

(*PETE comes to C.*)

PETE. Verne won't like it, but I can't help it.

TIM. You did jest the right thing. Now keep quiet an' we'll have Verne out of this hole in less'n no time.

PETE. Yes, and put Hal Irving into one. That's just what Verne's been trying to avoid. He had his sister to think of also.

TIM. So he did! Poor Nell!

PETE. It's going to be pretty hard for her, Mr. Purdy.

TIM. We must fix it up somehow without her getting wind of it.

PETE. But Pollard?

Enter MAB. and NEL., R., hurriedly. MAB. drops limply on bench.

MAB. Oh, Mr. Purdy, have you heard? Mercy, I'm all out of breath. Have the boys told you?

TIM. Told me what?

MAB. Nell, you tell him; I can't.

NEL. About the mean things Pollard tried to do over to Brewster.

TIM. I heard of it. The boys don't know about it, do they?

MAB. Know about it! I should say they do.

NEL. Yes, they're looking for Pollard now.

MAB. And they're mad enough to do most anything to him if they find him.

(*MAB., on bench. NEL., R. C. TIM, C. PETE, L. C.*)

TIM. This looks serious. I must put on my badge. Adams, keep your eyes open. [*Exit, in store.*]

(*Noise outside; distant shouts and cries coming nearer.*)

NEL. Listen, Mabel! The boys are coming.

MAB. Yes, lucky for Pollard he isn't here.

Enter GALE, R. Comes to C.

GALE. Is Pollard here? Tell me quick.

PETE. No, he left here five minutes ago.

GALE. This is no place for you, girls; there's going to be trouble.

MAB. Oh, let me stay. (*Rises.*) I want to see it if Pollard is in it.

GALE. You little heathen! You must help me to keep him out of it. Find him if you can and tell him to make himself scarce for a while.

MAB. You want me to play the good samaritan with him?

GALE. I don't want the boys to disgrace themselves. Adams, see if you can't reason with them; tell them to act like men, for my sake.

PETE. They've stood a lot already for your sake, Verne.

(NEL. comes down C. to GALE.)

GALE. I know, Adams, I know, but don't talk; minutes are precious. Hurry, both of you. (*Exeunt PETE and MAB., R.*) Nell, sister mine. Why, Nell, you've been crying! Tears on your birthday! What does this mean? (*NEL. hands GALE letter; does not speak. GALE opens, turns over and reads signature.*) From Hal!

NEL. He gave you some money to buy me a birthday present.

GALE. Does he say so?

NEL. Yes, a watch.

GALE. Well?

NEL. You did not get it?

GALE. No.

NEL. Why, Verne, tell me why?

GALE (*hesitatingly walks up stage; back to R. C.*). Well, I—I thought—you see I was afraid it would displease his father.

NEL. (*crossing*). Verne! (*Places hands on his shoulders and looks intently into his eyes.*) You are keeping something from me. You are; I can see it in your eyes. Oh, I know; I am not blind or stupid. The money, those marked bills—Hal took them, stole them—he gave them to you!

GALE. Hush, Nell, not so loud!

(Removes her hands gently and turns away.)

NEL. You do not deny it ; you can't, Verne.

GALE. No, Nell.

NEL. And Hal is a thief ; stole money from his father. Oh, it's terrible, Verne ; it's almost unbelievable.

GALE (*sadly*). Almost unbelievable, yes !

NEL. And you, Verne, for him, for me, you have borne Pollard's insults and Mr. Irving's abuse.

GALE. It was the only thing to do.

NEL. But now they must know,—everybody must know.

GALE. Not now, Nell, not now ; wait !

NEL. Wait ? No, you have suffered too much already.

GALE. What can you do ? Mr. Irving wouldn't believe it if you told him.

NEL. But the letter ?

GALE. You wouldn't show him that.

NEL. No, but I can show it to Uncle Tim.

GALE. Nell, listen to me. Wait, wait till Hal comes home !

NEL. No, Verne, I'm going to tell Uncle Tim.

GALE. Stop, Nell, stop ! (NEL. *starts to exit in store.*) Well, it's bound to come out. I've done my best for Hal, poor fellow !

(TIM *appears at store door, pinning badge on coat.*)

TIM. There, I cal'late that'll make 'em respect the law.

NEL. Oh, Uncle Tim, it was Hal Irving who took the money ! I've found out all about it !

TIM. An' so have I. (*Comes c.*)

GALE. You, Uncle Tim ?

TIM. Yes, your Uncle Timothy has got the thing all simmered down fine. Verne, I'm proud of ye.

NEL. And so am I, Uncle Tim. But Hal ; what about him ? Isn't it terrible ?

TIM. Now, jest don't worry, little girl. Somehow, I have the feelin' that things is a-goin' to work out all right.

NEL. How, Uncle Tim ? Tell me how ?

TIM. I dunno's I c'n do that, Nell, but I feel it in my bones that somethin's goin' to happen. (*Looks off.*) Perhaps it's goin' to happen right away. Here comes Irving himself. Guess you'd better leave me alone with him a spell.

GALE. Be careful, Uncle Tim. Spare Hal if you can.

NEL. Yes, but remember Mr. Irving must know that Verne is innocent.

TIM. Bless your dear heart, child ! Leave it all to your

Uncle Tim. And you, Verne, God bless ye, I wish—oh—I wish you was *my* boy.

GALE. Uncle Tim, I——

TIM. There, skeedaddle, both of you, he's coming.

[*Exeunt NEL. and GALE, L.*]

Enter IRV. ; comes down R. C.

IRV. What is the meaning of this noisy demonstration?

TIM. Guess I don't quite get ye, Mr. Irving.

IRV. I met a mob of boys going toward my factory shouting like mad; what does it mean?

TIM. Guess they're jest celebratin'! Boys will be boys.

IRV. But they kept calling Pollard's name.

(IRV., R. C. TIM, L. C.)

TIM. Probably want him to help 'em celebrate. He's something of a sport himself, so I'm told.

IRV. He's a gentleman.

TIM. Glad you think so; he ain't the kind we raise in the country, though. Goin' to start up soon, Mr. Irving?

IRV. In a few days.

TIM. Fire didn't cripple ye much, did it?

IRV. No, the damage was mostly in the storehouse.

TIM. Close call, though.

IRV. It was, indeed.

TIM. Mighty close call for you, too; Verne Gale saved your life, Mr. Irving.

IRV. I do not forget that. I am not ungrateful, Mr. Purdy. Have you anything new?

TIM. I know Verne's an innocent boy, Mr. Irving.

IRV. You speak very confidently.

TIM. That's because I know what I'm talking about.

IRV. What do you mean? Explain yourself.

TIM. I wish I could without hurtin' your feelin's, because——

IRV. Never mind my feelings; say it, and say it quick.

TIM. I—er—that is—I happen to know for a fact that your son Hal gave Verne that marked bill.

IRV. My son! You don't mean——

TIM. Oh, I don't say Hal *stole* it, Mr. Irving.

IRV. *Stole it.* Harold *steal*! Why, man, you're crazy!

Hal had money enough. Besides, why should he be giving Gale money?

TIM. I can't tell you that.

IRV. I have a right to know.

TIM. Ask your son.

IRV. You know that's impossible.

TIM. If you hadn't sent him away this thing wouldn't have happened.

IRV. I sent him away for his own good.

TIM. That's your idee of it; but he felt that he wasn't bein' treated square; an' if he did take your money, money that he hadn't orter took, you mustn't be too hard on him. He ain't the only one to blame.

IRV. Enough, Purdy! Why, man, you are trying to place the responsibility for this whole affair upon me.

TIM. See here, Mr. Irving, men of your age an' mine is apt to git sorter sot an' narrer. We like to have our own way, an' sometimes our way ain't the best way. Now there's your son. He's taken a strong fancy to Nellie Gale, an' I tell you, Mr. Irving, a better girl never drawed breath. You don't like it—you —

IRV. I don't propose to let him ruin his life by throwing himself away upon an obscure country girl.

TIM. No; 'tain't in accordance with your idees, so you send your boy away, your only child, an' he bids ye good-bye with bitter feelin's in his heart toward ye. If he has done wrong, so have you, Mr. Irving. You robbed him of his right to have friends an'—yes—an' love of his own choosin'.

IRV. Stop, Purdy, you are going too far. My son's future is in my hands.

TIM. No; it's in his *own* hands, Mr. Irving. You put it there when you sent him away. Why shouldn't he choose his own friends? He's shown mighty good judgment. Why shouldn't he pick out a wife to suit himself? He's going to live with her, you ain't. But suppose you do? Suppose the time comes when you want a touch of the home feelin', the love an' sympathy that sorter gits down where a man lives? Then you'll be sorry that you didn't give up your sot idees an' notions, an' let your boy follow the promptin's of his own heart.

IRV. I warn you again, Purdy! You have no right to talk to me in this manner.

TIM. I'm talkin' as one father to another, Mr. Irving. If I'd had some one to beat a little sense into me as I'm a-tryin'

to do to you (*with emotion*) instead of a green mound over in the churchyard yonder, I might 'a' had a boy to-day to love an' be proud of an' take to my heart.

IRV. What! You had a son?

TIM. Yes; you didn't know that, did you, Mr. Irving? I sent him away, drove him from home because he crossed my will. Sent him away in hot anger, jest as you sent your boy away. I never saw my boy again alive, never had a chance to tell him that I'd made a mistake an' was sorry for it —

IRV. Don't, Purdy, don't, I beg of you!

TIM. It needed a blow like that to bring me to my senses. I've had my lesson, an' I've paid the price. Don't make the same mistake, Mr. Irving. Send for your boy; send for him before it's too late. Git his confidence, talk things over, an' don't forgit you was a boy yourself once. You can't drive your son, he ain't that kind; he's too much like his father. (*TIM pauses and IRV., who has turned away, doesn't reply. TIM holds out his hands entreatingly.*) Don't have hard feelin's toward me, Mr. Irving. I'm a rough, blunt man, but the sorer that came to me made my heart sorter tender like for all boys that don't seem to be gittin' a square deal.

(*IRV. should indicate a struggle between his pride and better nature. TIM watches him closely. Suddenly IRV., without a word, grasps TIM's hand and holds it firmly, the other hand on TIM's shoulder, looks him in the eye an instant, and exits without a word. TIM watches IRV. off, then sits on bench, head bowed in hands.*)

Enter NEL. and GALE, L.

NEL. (*going to TIM*). Oh, Uncle Tim, what is it? Was Mr. Irving very, very angry?

TIM. No, Nell; not very angry.

GALE. Did you tell him about the letter?

TIM. No; I jest talked things over with him a little.

NEL. And he was harsh and cruel, he said things that hurt you?

TIM. Why, no, Nell, I can't say's he did. I did most o' the talkin', an' I had to tell him some things that hurt *me*, that made me feel sorry an' sad, for a spell; but I guess I set him to thinkin'; I guess I touched him where his heart is, if he's got one.

Enter PETE, R.

(TIM on bench. NEL., R. C. PETE, C. GALE, L. C.)

PETE. It's no use, Verne! I can do nothing with the boys.

GALE. Then I must try my hand at it.

PETE. It'll do no good. If they find Pollard there's sure to be a mix-up.

TIM. Then they know the whole story? (*Rises.*)

PETE. Yes, more even than you know.

TIM. How's that?

(*Crosses with NEL., who sits on bench.*)

GALE. Tell us all about it, Adams, everything you know.

PETE. Well, this is the way the boys got it from King, the Brewsters' pitcher. It seems that Pollard has been backing the Brewsters for the championship.

GALE. Ah, I thought so.

PETE. He wants them to win out of spite against you, for one thing, Verne.

GALE. Yes, he made that plain enough.

PETE. Then when Ferd Pike's arm went back on him, Pollard thought our team was crippled sure, and he put up a lot more money on Brewster. He thought he saw a chance to win a stack of money.

TIM. That's where he made a dum fool mistake, wasn't it, Adams?

PETE. It looks that way. Then you signed me, Verne, and he tried his crooked work with me.

GALE. With you, Adams? You never told me.

TIM. But it didn't go, did it, Adams?

PETE. No, it didn't go; so he went over to Brewster and tackled King, offered to pay him his own price if he'd only put you and me out of the game; cripple us, spike us, any old way. He told King he didn't care how he did it, so long as he put us out.

NEL. (*who has been listening intently to the conversation*). The wretch!

(*Rises and crosses—stands at GALE's right.*)

PETE. Can you blame the boys for being angry, Mr. Purdy?

TIM. Blame 'em! Great Scott, I wish I wasn't a policeman.

NEL. Why, Uncle Tim!

TIM. Wal, I do! The idee; an' Irving says Pollard's a gentleman. Huh!

Enter ALMIRA. Comes c.

ALMIRA. Wal, of all the strange things, what do you think? Hal Irving's come home!

TIM. What's that? Say it again!

GALE. Hal home! What can it mean!

NEL. (*taking GALE'S hand, he putting his arm around her waist*). Is he really, *really* home, Mrs. Purdy?

ALMIRA. That's what I said.

NEL. Now we'll know; know the whole truth. I dread it, Verne. Oh, I dread it!

GALE. Hush, Nell, hush!

TIM. Do you know this for sure, Almiry, or is it something you've heard?

ALMIRA. *Something I've heard?* Can't I believe my own eyes? Wal, I guess I can! Didn't I see Hiram a-carryin' Hal up to Irving's, bag and baggage? Wal, I guess I did. Did I *hear* it? No, I *saw* it!

NEL. When, Mrs. Purdy?

ALMIRA. Jest now; jest as I's comin' home. I met Mr. Irving, an' when I told him about it he started off's if he'd been shot out of a gun. Where you been all the mornin', Verne?

GALE. I've not been far away.

ALMIRA. You're as hard to locate as a lightnin' bug. I've been chasin' all over the village after ye. I declare I'm all beat out.

[*Exit in store.*]

GALE. Things are happening fast, aren't they, Uncle Tim?

TIM. Yes, something's up; I dunno what; I'm glad Hal's home, though. 'Twon't take long now to get at the bottom of the whole business.

NEL. (*sadly*). Yes, that's what it means. Hal's disgrace. Oh, Uncle Tim! Is there no way to spare him?

TIM. I hope so. P'raps Hal an' his father c'n fix things up somehow so't won't get out.

(*Noise outside, boys shouting and crying: "Oh, we won't do a thing to Pollard! Won't we? Wait and see."*)

GALE. That sounds like mischief, Uncle Tim.

(*Voices outside* : "What's the matter with Verne Gale ?
He's all right.")

TIM. That sounds peaceable enough.

(*Voice outside* : "And Adams, too ?")

GALE. We can say amen to that, can't we ?

(*Voices outside* : "Sure, Adams, too.")

"Rah, rah, rah for Westvale,
Three times three for Gale,
We've got no use for Pollard,
Pete Adams is not for sale."

Cheers and shrill whistles.)

NEL. I'm afraid, Uncle Tim.

ALMIRA (*at store door*). What in the name of sin is all this noise ?

TIM. It's only the boys, Almira. Take Nell in there with you. She's a little nervous.

ALMIRA. Come right in here, Nell. If there's any trouble we c'n see it an' not be in it.

(NEL. *starts in door with ALMIRA.*)

(*Voice outside* :

"Has anybody here seen Pollard ?
Has anybody here seen Pollard,
Pollard with the red necktie ?
If we once get our hands on Pollard,
We'll give him a jet black eye."

"Hooray ! That's what ! Sure thing !")

TIM. By cricky, Verne, I guess we're in for it.

GALE. If they come here we must lay down the law to them.

(*Voices have been gradually coming nearer all through this dialogue. Now about to enter.*)

PETE (*outside*). Now, boys, here we are. Remember what we came for. Forget Pollard for a little while, can't you ?

GALE. That's right, Adams, reason with them.

(*Not addressed to PETE, but to TIM.*)

(*Voice outside : " We can, but we won't ! "*)

PETE (*outside*). But remember Verne and his sister.

(*ALMIRA and NEL. on platform.*)

TIM. Good boy, Adams, good boy !

(*GALE and TIM, L. F.*)

(*Voices outside : " That's what we came for."*)

GALE. What do they mean by that ?

PETE (*outside*). All right ! Now, then, altogether. (*Enter boys, R., headed by PETE. ALMIRA and NEL. start back in store. Boys come down R.*) Don't go, Miss Gale ; we want you.

NEL. (*coming out timidly, holding ALMIRA'S hand*). Want me, me ! I don't know where Pollard is !

VOICE. That ain't it, Nellie.

VOICE. No, 'tain't that at all.

GALE. What does this mean, Adams ? What do the boys want ?

VOICE. Tell him, Adams.

VOICE. No, tell *her*.

TIM. I'd be mightily obliged to you boys if you'd jest let us know the meanin' of this gatherin'.

VOICE. Oh, brace up, Adams ! Warm up !

PETE. Miss Gale, the boys have asked me to do something for them. Something that is very hard for me to do.

NEL. I don't understand.

VOICE. Oh, go on, Adams, put it right over the plate, no curves.

VOICE. That's right, Adams, give her a straight one.

PETE. Be quiet, boys ; I can't talk in all this noise. You see, Miss Gale, we boys have heard that to-day is your birthday, and we want to make you a present.

NEL. A present ? How kind of you, how very kind of you, boys.

PETE. We want to give you something to remember the Westvale boys by, something that will remind you of their friendship for you and their loyalty to Verne. I don't know

what to say. There's plenty of the boys can do this better than I'm doing it.

VOICE. You're out of your box, Adams! Don't balk.

VOICE. Don't try any out curves, either. Just a straight away delivery.

PETE. All right, boys, here goes for a strike out. Miss Gale, here's a watch for you. We boys have bought it and paid for it with our own money. Take it with the best wishes of the Westvale ball team.

VOICES. Good, Adams! Great! Fine!

VOICE. Three cheers for Nellie and Verne.

(Given with a will.)

VOICE. Speech, Nellie, speech!

NEL. Oh, boys, I can't! I can't say anything. You are too good. *(Breaks down sobbing.)*

TIM *(wiping tears from his eyes)*. Verne, I guess it's up to you to say something.

GALE. Boys, you've bunched your hits in great shape. It is such a surprise, so totally unexpected; I can't begin to express what I want to say. Uncle Tim, say something; thank them for Nell, for me. *(Turns away to hide emotion.)*

TIM *(blowing nose vigorously)*. By the great horn spoon, boys! Talk about strike outs! Adams, you're too speedy for me; I can't do anything with your delivery. Boys, you're all right! All I've got to say is, keep your heads; don't do anything you'll be sorry for. You know what I mean.

ALL. Yes, we know. Sure, we're on all right. Leave it to us, etc.

MAB. *(outside)*. Mr. Rowell, Pollard wants you to call for him at the shoe factory. He's going away on the next train.

HIRAM *(outside)*. All right, Miss Remington. I'll get him to the depot in time.

ALL. Pollard, the shoe factory! We'll see him off, Mr. Purdy. Don't worry! *[Exeunt, hurriedly.]*

TIM. By cricky! Mabel's got us into a pretty mess.

NEL. Don't blame Mabel. She didn't know the boys were here.

Enter MAB., R.

MAB. The boys are running like mad. I've put my foot in it this time, haven't I?

GALE *(impatiently)*. You surely have.

MAB. Now don't be cross, Verne !

'TIM. Verne's all right. He's excited, that's all.

ALMIRA. An' I don't wonder. Them boys is enough to git anybody excited.

MAB. I don't care, anyway. I've stood enough from Pol-lard ; more than you know. I hope he gets his deserts.

'TIM. He will if the boys git a-hold of him, I bet ye !

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD (*rushing up to GALE, shaking both hands ; GALE doesn't speak*). Verne, old boy ! (HAROLD *turns to NEL. ; holds her hands. He speaks to her and MAB.*) Nellie, it's good to be back ; on your birthday, too. I did not forget.

(GALE, R. HAROLD, R. C. NEL. C. TIM, R. C. MAB., L. C. ALMIRA, L. *up stage.*)

NEL. (*sadly*). My birthday, yes.

HAROLD. Lively times, eh, Mabel ?

MAB. (*coolly*). I should say so, rather !

HAROLD. Mr. Purdy, I want to ——

TIM. Jest a moment, Hal. Do you know what Verne's been through since you went away ?

HAROLD. Do I *know* ? Well, I guess I do. That's what brought me home flying. I read all about it in the papers.

NEL. About the robbery ?

(*During all of above dialogue a feeling of restraint is indicated by all but HAROLD.*)

HAROLD. Yes, the robbery and the fire.

NEL. And about Verne ?

HAROLD. Not until I got home.

NEL. Did your father tell you ?

HAROLD. Yes. Verne, you great big, noble-hearted chump ! Why didn't you tell where you got that money ?

GALE. How could I ?

TIM. He couldn't say anything without throwing suspicion on you, don't you see ?

GALE. And besides, I gave you my promise.

HAROLD. That's right ! Verne, I never dreamed I was going to get you into such a scrape.

MAB. He saved your father's life, too ; and risked his own to do it.

HAROLD. Yes, I know; father has told me all about it. It's no use to say anything, Verne; I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am.

GALE. Don't try, Hal. It's all right.

HAROLD. Yes, it's all right now, glory be! I've told father the whole story, about the watch and everything.

(*Takes GALE's hand.*)

NEL. (*aside, to TIM*). Ask him about the money, Uncle Tim.

TIM (*nodding to NEL. in reply*). Did you tell him all about the money, too?

HAROLD. Why, of course I did. Great heavens! You don't think I stole it, do you?

MAB. You gave it to Verne. What *could* we think?

TIM. And Adams saw you take it from the safe.

HAROLD. You've made out a strong case against me, haven't you? I may as well own up.

TIM. Then you did take it?

HAROLD. Yes, I took it.

NEL. But you didn't steal it; I know now that you didn't, Hal.

HAROLD. I should say not! Let me explain.

TIM. Go ahead! That's just what we're all waitin' for.

HAROLD. Of course, you know that I sold my motor-boat, Verne?

GALE. Yes.

TIM. What's that got to do with it?

HAROLD. Don't be impatient, Mr. Purdy. (*Turns to GALE.*) I got the money for it the day before I went away; one hundred and twenty-five dollars.

GALE. You sold it dirt cheap.

HAROLD. That's right, but I needed the money. Now the plot thickens. Listen! That night, after I found that father was determined to send me West, I went back to the office and changed two fifty-dollar bills into small bills. These, I am told, were marked; the bills I gave you, Verne.

GALE. The bills your father said were stolen!

NEL. And you only changed them.

HAROLD. That's all.

GALE. Shake, Hal! I couldn't believe you'd do it! Oh, I'm glad it's all right! So glad, Hal!

NEL. I'm too happy to talk, Hal.

(*Takes his other hand.*)

MAB. I'd like to hear Pollard call Verne a thief now.

HAROLD. Has he ever done that?

MAB. I guess he has; Verne's borne a lot for your sake.

HAROLD. I'll punch Pollard's head for him!

TIM. I can't git it through my noddle about that money, though. If you only changed it, Hal, your father must have made a mistake. There wasn't any robbery?

HAROLD. Yes, there was. The two fifty dollar bills were missing.

NEL. Then some one did steal them after all?

HAROLD. Yes. The question is, who?

(*TIM slaps his thigh with right hand, and scratches his head.*)

GALE. What's the matter, Uncle Tim?

TIM. I've got an idee. I have one once in a while.

ALMIRA. I never knew ye to have one in your leg before.

(*TIM exits into store, followed by ALMIRA.*)

HAROLD. Now, Nellie, let's see the watch. I hope you liked it. (NEL. *hands watch.* HAROLD, *surprised.*) Why, Verne, this isn't what I told you to get!

GALE. I didn't get it.

NEL. The boys gave me this; the ball team.

HAROLD. But I thought,—oh, I see! You couldn't, of course you couldn't do it.

GALE. No, I gave one bill to Adams and one to Hi Rowell. Then the trouble began. The rest of the money is locked up in my desk.

HAROLD. Verne, you're the whitest boy I know. Never mind, Nell. The boys got ahead of me on the watch but I'll make up for *lost time*. There's a pun to match some of *your* wretched ones, Verne.

GALE. It isn't so bad, at that. What are you going to do now?

HAROLD. I'm going to buy Nellie a ring.

NEL. A ring?

HAROLD. Yes, a ring, and it's going to have a spark in it as bright as your eyes are this minute.

NEL. Don't joke, Hal! You can't get a ring; your father —

HAROLD. Now just leave it to me to manage Dad.

MAB. I guess you don't realize how harsh and cruel your father has been to Verne and Nell.

NEL. Don't speak of it, Mabel, I beg of you.

MAB. Oh, it's all right for you to talk. Haven't I got some feelings? Do you suppose I've been having a picnic while Verne's been called all sorts of mean things by Mr. Irving and Pollard?

HAROLD. Of course you haven't, Mabel. And I tell you right now that father and Pollard have got to square themselves with the whole bunch and that goes. (*Confusion outside.*) What's broke loose now?

(*HAROLD and GALE walk up R. C. and down L. Boys enter R. with POL. seated on a narrow board on which his suitcase is also hung. A boy on either side steadies POL. by his shoulders. TIM and ALMIRA appear at door.*)

TIM. What's a-goin' on here, boys?

POL. Mr. Purdy, I demand your protection. Send these boys away.

VOICE. We're only taking him down to the depot.

(*BOYS, R. TIM, C. GALE, MAB., NEL., and HAROLD grouped at L.*)

VOICE. Thought you'd like to say good-bye, Mr. Purdy.

VOICE. Yes, and Pollard wants to shake a day-day to the ladies.

(*During these speeches the boys bounce POL. up and down on the board roughly.*)

TIM. I'm an officer of the law, boys; be careful what you do.

POL. As an officer then, I demand protection, Purdy.

TIM. Pollard, you don't seem to be enjoyin' yourself, that's a fact; but I guess you're gettin' about what you deserve. You didn't git away quick enough.

VOICE. Yes, he's going now, all right, leave it to us.

TIM. Just a minute there, boys. Pollard, before you go I want that money you stole from Mr. Irving's safe.

POL. I haven't—I—I didn't take it!

TIM (*sternly*). Come, fork it over ! No bluffs. Where are those bills I saw in your pocketbook t'other day ?

HAROLD. You, Pollard ?

GALE. You don't mean, Uncle Tim —— ?

MAB. Yes, he does. See how white Pollard is.

VOICES. Soak him, boys ! Yes, he tried to lay it on to Verne. (*The boys crowd around POL. threateningly.*)

GALE. Steady, boys ! Let Uncle Tim manage him.

VOICE. We're going to have a hand in it, too.

(*They shake POL. up again.*)

POL. Don't, boys, don't ! Make them stop, Purdy.

TIM. Then give up the money, quick. I won't answer for the boys if you don't.

POL. Here take it ! (*Takes pocketbook and throws it down.*) The game is up ; now let me go.

TIM. What do you say, Hal ? What shall we do with him ?

(*Opens book, takes out bills, hands book back to POL.*)

Enter IRV., R.

HAROLD. I've no use for him ; ask father.

(BOYS, R. IRV. and TIM, C. MAB., GALE, NEL. and HAROLD grouped at L. ALMIRA on store platform.)

IRV. What does this outrage mean ? Purdy, do you permit this ?

TIM. Wal, I ain't very enthusiastic about stoppin' it.

HAROLD. 'There's your thief, father. (*Points to POL.*)

TIM. An' there's your money. (*Hands bills to IRV.*) Now what're you goin' to do with Pollard ?

IRV. Do you mean to tell me that Pollard stole my money ?

TIM. Sure thing.

IRV. Pollard, what have you to say ?

POL. (*surlily*). Nothing.

IRV. So you do not deny it ? Pollard, I took you for a gentleman, treated you like one ; and all the time you've been stealing from me. More than that, Pollard, you've tried to disgrace an innocent boy and made me act like a brute to Verne Gale and his sister. You've even allowed my own son's name to come under suspicion. You are a cur and a coward. Boys, take him away. (*Turns back on POL.*)

TIM. You've got your money ; are you going to prosecute ?

IRV. No !

TIM. Then git out, Pollard ! Take him down to the depot, boys, an' for goodness' sake don't miss the express.

(Boys exit with POL. noisily ; MAB., GALE and TIM cross stage, watch them off and come down R. Just as the boys start off HIRAM enters, R.)

HIRAM. Here, where in thunder air you goin' with my passenger ? *(Boys exit laughing.)* Now that ain't fair ; Pollard hired me. There's a quarter gone to glory.

TIM. Never mind, Hi ; it's worth a quarter to git rid of him.

HIRAM. T'hadn't ought to come out of my pocket, though.

ALMIRA. Oh, shucks, Hi ! You can't lose what you never had.

TIM. Mr. Irving, don't you think now after all's said an' done that Verne an' Nell an' I have handled this thing pretty well ?

IRV. Indeed you have. Verne, my boy, forgive me if you can. *(Crosses and takes GALE's hand.)*

GALE. With all my heart, Mr. Irving.

IRV. And you, Miss Gale—Nellie — *(Holds out both hands.)* Have you no word for me ?

NEL. *(crossing over and taking his hands).* Yes, Mr. Irving, I can overlook everything now that Verne's good name is cleared of suspicion and Hal is—is home —

IRV. Nellie, I've been harsh and cruel. It was because I wanted to have my own way ; but Uncle Tim has taught me a lesson. Now I'm going to let Hal have his way.

NEL. Oh, Mr. Irving ! You don't mean—you can't mean that Hal can —

HAROLD. Yes, he does, Nell ! Hooray, yes he does. *(IRV. holds out his arms and NEL. rushes into them for a fatherly welcome. HAROLD looks on approvingly.)* There, Dad, break away ! I figure in on this myself. *(Kisses NEL.)*

ALMIRA *(to HIRAM)*. They're makin' love right under our noses, Hi !

HIRAM. I don't care. I've been vaccinated.

IRV. *(going to C. of stage with TIM ; putting arm on his shoulder)*. Uncle Tim, I can sit at your feet and learn

wisdom. Why, it's positively refreshing to be able to make people happy.

TIM (*heartily*). Wal, I guess it is. It's the only thing worth while. I don't know of anything that pays bigger dividends.

(*Engine whistle heard.*)

MAB. There goes Pollard ; our troubles are over.

(GALE and MAB., R. C. TIM and IRV., C. NEL. and HAROLD,
L. C. ALMIRA and HIRAM *on platform.*)

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